

TAREQ AZIZ

IRAQ - IRAN CONFLICT

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSIONS



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Tareq Aziz

**The Iraq-Iran Conflict
Questions and Discussions**

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Author's Preface

A good deal of interest, differences of opinion and argument has been raised by the Iraq-Iran war, particularly in the Arab homeland and among Arab ruling circles and political parties.

In this book I do not assume to cover all aspects of this conflict, since these can only be covered in a broader treatment.

This book, rather, deals particularly with the charges and distortions of the truth made against Iraq by certain political Arab parties, some of which are in power, as a pretext for their siding with Iran in this conflict.

However, the attitude of these parties seems not unrelated to the policies of certain international circles, whether overt or covert.

The promoters of this campaign of accusations and distortions have been carrying it out under a barrage of smoke against Iraq's position. At the same time they feared and avoided direct and objective discussion of these charges and distortions.

The political parties involved in this campaign, whose identity is revealed in this series of articles, have so far refused to discuss the issue and resorted instead to silence. The reason is not difficult to discover for a clever and objective reader.

Furthermore, these parties have even refused to discuss the Iraq-Iran conflict within Arab and international bodies, so they abstained from the Amman Arab Summit. In other high-level meetings, such as the Islamic Summit Conference at Taif in Saudi Arabia, the ruling circles among these pro-Iran parties kept silent.

In order to provide readers with a fuller picture, I have added as an appendix a further series of three articles which I wrote for the same magazine* in April and May 1980. This series, "To avoid confusing the issues", was published more than a

* *Al-Watan al-Arabi* (Paris)

year before the outbreak of armed conflict between Iraq and Iran. They dealt with the crisis of the Iraq-Iran relations at that time and before.

I hope the reader will find it helpful that I have brought together both groups of articles, since both deal with one particular subject.

Tareq Aziz

Chapter 1

Who started the conflict?

How can the present war between Iraq and Iran be explained? Who started it? How has the situation developed into a state of open war? What were the forces that brought the situation to this serious stage? What should the true Arab nationalist attitude be towards the current war between Iraq and Iran? What results are expected from this war? And what effect does all this have on the major Arab issues, and especially the Palestine cause and the Arab-Zionist conflict?

Many questions are raised today and many opinions expressed, each with its own supporters, which is something we may not be able to change or to influence. Those who uphold such views are motivated either by certain ideological factors or by political interests that determine their present position and their opinions.

However, facts must be objectively sought because the great majority of the Arab masses and the true Arabs, concerned with their nation's major issues, are going to resort to facts and logic in assessing the war and in assessing the opinions and positions of individuals, parties or states.

In this modest attempt I will try to discuss these questions and opinions now circulating among the people, with a view to enabling honest and objective sons of the Arab nation to reach the truth and in consequence to judge every opinion concerning this conflict.

Who started the conflict? Both sides to the conflict may produce a lot of evidence to accuse each other of starting the conflict and hence the war. The objective observer may be puzzled and unable to find the truth.

Despite being affiliated from a position of responsibility to one of the sides, I will try my best to discuss this question relying on facts and common basic information known to both sides.

Could Iraq start the conflict with Iran and in consequence bear

the responsibility for starting the war against it?

To start a conflict with another party and develop it to the stage of open war, one has to be motivated either by principles or by interests, or both.

Would the principles and interests of Iraq lead it to conflict and open war with Iran?

The system of government in Iraq is led by the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party. The Arab Ba'th Socialist Party is a nationalist and Arab unionist party, so Iraq has vis-à-vis Iran only two aims based on its principles: the first concerns the sovereignty of Iraq over its territories which were not returned to it by the Iranians despite the acknowledgement of this by all agreements concluded between the two countries in this century from 1913 until 1975. It also concerns the sovereignty of Iraq over the Shatt-al-Arab waterway, which had always been under Iraqi sovereignty until the 1975 agreement which gave Iran advantages in the Shatt-al-Arab according to the Thalweg principle.

The second aim is a nationalist Arab one and concerns the area of Ahwaz or Arabistan, that Iran calls Khuzistan.

Apart from these two aims, Iraq has no objectives in Iran, based on principled attitudes. Iraq will not think of getting Iran to unite with it to form a nucleus of Arab unity, simply because Iran is not an Arab country.

Because of the nature of its nationalist policies, Iraq is not concerned with the nature of the present regime in Iran, except in so far as Iran's attitude towards its relations with Iraq and the Arab Nation is concerned, and in so far as its regime is hostile or friendly.

These are the only two principled motives for Iraq possibly starting a conflict with Iran which might eventually develop into war.

If this is the principled side of the matter, then what is the other side that relates to interests as far as Iraq is concerned?

Iraq is not a small country in size; it is the largest of all the eastern Arab countries after Saudi Arabia and the biggest in population of these countries; and it is one of the richest Arab countries, something which is well-known to the world at large. Could Iraq, therefore, risk a costly war in order to expand its territory or to increase its wealth?

This question can be raised, and I think the sound answer to it is that no wise leadership could plunge into a complex and costly war like the one with Iran, with all the possible consequent

risks, in order to expand its territory without having a strategic need to do so, or to increase its wealth. Besides, one should take into account the possibility of not achieving the objective owing to international circumstances and balances which might not permit a change in the political map of the region.

Despite the noisy propaganda and accusations circulating in the region, neither of the superpowers support such an objective. The Soviet Union is, according to its own statements, taking a neutral attitude towards the conflict and has not supported Iraq either covertly or overtly. The US, despite the situation which exists between it and the present regime in Iran, has officially and categorically confirmed its support for the "unity of Iran" — that is its opposition to the severance of any part of the territories that form the present Iranian state. These positions are well-known to the Iraqi leadership, who have no illusions whatsoever about them.

Let us now look at the Iranian side. Are there any principled motives that might cause the Iranian side to instigate conflict with Iraq and then launch war against it? What are Iran's interests in this?

The basis and guise of the present regime in Iran is religious and sectarian; therefore it is obviously a matter of principle for this regime to pursue certain aims of expansion and influence against all Islamic countries in general and against those neighbouring Iran in particular. But did these aims constitute a merely static ideological attitude or an urgent task? The Iranian rulers have already answered it clearly in that they believe in and work for "exporting" the Iranian Revolution to the Islamic countries and in that the "Islamic Revolution" will not live if it remained only in a single country, Iran. This is what has been said by the leading parties to the Iranian regime, Khomeini, Bani Sadr, Behshati and Rajai. If they have differences over other issues, they are all agreed on this point.

It is also known that the new rulers in Iran have made official statements in which they have clearly announced that they seek to overthrow the system in Iraq, proceeding from a religious and sectarian attitude which they do nothing to hide. These parties were even competing with each other in declaring this objective; in trying to prove the possibility of its achievement by using various evidence; and in priding themselves on alleged "events and developments" that they considered sufficient evidence that the targets are about to be realised.

One of the most prominent highlights in this respect was the

official statement issued in April 1980 by Khomeini's office, the President of Iran and the prime minister, reporting the alleged assassination of President Saddam Hussein, and the announcement of this "news" in Damascus by the Iranian Foreign Minister Qotbzadeh. This naturally means that the officials of the Iranian regime "officially" adopt the objective of overthrowing the system in Iraq as an urgent political task and not only as a future objective based on ideological grounds.

As for their "interests", no one at present can assess how these rulers view the interests of their country. Logically speaking, Iran has no "interest" in quarrelling with Iraq and consequently waging war against it. But if the Iranian rulers plunge into hostilities against Iraq in such a way, then they must either be indifferent to the legitimate and basic interests of Iran or else they are remoulding these interests according to the motives mentioned above.

However, if we consider — and this is our own view — that the policy of the present Iranian regime is similar to that of the previous one, which is an expansionist policy, whether it took the form of imperial dreams such as those motivating the Shah's regime or that of "exporting revolution" as is the case under the present regime, then we shall see an obvious interest for Iranians in quarrelling with Iraq and waging war against it. It is the only means of expansion not only against Iraq but also against the Arab Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula. Iran under the Shah knew very well that before settling accounts with Iraq it would not be able to tread on the western bank of the Arab Gulf. This is also what it now knows under Khomeini.

In discussing the question of who started the conflict it is imperative to remember recent historical events. When the Iranian Revolution occurred, Iraq had been the main initiator of the Baghdad Summit, something that gained it an excellent position at the Arab and international levels. Meanwhile Iraq and Syria had met in the Joint Charter for Nationalist Action which raised the hopes for achieving unity between the two countries and establishing a strong base for the confrontation with the Zionist enemy.

It is illogical for Iraq, therefore, to dissipate this excellent moral and political position by stirring up conflict with a neighbouring country that embraced a new revolution. The previous articles I wrote in May 1980 (on Arab-Iranian relations) contained many tangible examples of the fact that the Iranian anti-Iraq campaign had started at that time — that is, at the stage of the

joint charter with Syria and not afterwards.

If Iraq had plunged into its conflict with Iran for propaganda victories, as some of its critics say, it would have been much easier for it to join the "Front for Steadfastness and Confrontation Front" than engaging in a war with Iran. This Front has proved, after three years of its existence, that its membership will entail many publicity advantages without any real duties either in funds or in blood or even in international relations and stands.

Logical analysis of the situation indicates that, despite the fact that Iraq has principled motives for instigating conflict with Iran, namely its right to restore its territories and its right of sovereignty over the Shatt-al-Arab waterway, the most sound assessment for Iraq at the outbreak of the Iranian revolution was to put off these demands until proper conditions were available, since it was in an excellent position politically and morally that it should sustain. And this is exactly what Iraq did.

As for the cause of Arabistan, logically speaking it should not be taken up when the Arab situation and the Arabs of Arabistan were not well prepared, for these Arabs are the main proponents of this cause while Iraq is their direct supporter. Iraq had also been responsible for the Baghdad Summit and was tied to Syria by the Joint Charter; and it is a country of confrontation (with the Zionist entity) that took part in every war with that entity and whose absence from any new war, whatever the excuses may be, will not be forgiven.

But when Iran opens fire against Iraq and, from the first day of the assumption of power by the new group, rushes to pursue attempts to overthrow the revolutionary nationalist system in Iraq and to launch campaigns of hostility and distortions against it, then the pursuit of the issue of territories, the Shatt-al-Arab and even that of Arabistan will not be a wrong attitude from political and principled points of view. Every state is entitled to demand its rights, even from its friends. So what will be the case if the people who have usurped these rights harbour hostile attitudes and ill-intentioned desires against it?

The historical truth is that Iraq has certain rights, and no objectives or territorial ambitions in Iran. It was ready to put off its demand for these rights owing to the conditions at the pan-Arab level and to the new situation in Iran, and it actually did this. However, when the Iranian side openly embarked on hostile stands towards Iraq there remained no

justification whatsoever for the postponement of these demands, whether from a position of principles, or of interests, or of political considerations.

As Iran was obviously more prepared to start the conflict with Iraq, let us see which side was more prepared to turn the conflict into war.

The system of government in Iraq is stable and well-established. Its political, military, economic and information institutions operate in an orderly way. It has a united central leadership and a prominent leader, both of which constitute the centre of decision-making and of the exact supervision of the execution of orders.

Since the decision to fight a war is very serious, no system of such a nature can find itself pushed into war without awareness, planning and a clear will. As we have previously concluded that principles and interests would not push Iraq into starting the conflict with Iran, this logically implies that he who does not start the conflict does not start the war. This, nevertheless, should not exclude the preparedness of Iraq, specially if it knew beforehand that the other party was harbouring evil designs against it, something that actually happened.

As for the situation in Iran, it is completely different. Since the assumption of power by the new group, Iran has been in a serious state of internal disputes and schisms. The existence of trends, groups and various conflicting attitudes in Iran is a fact; and the disintegration of the political, military, security and information organs of state and their participation in the schisms and the power struggles is also a fact.

Though logically such a country would be in serious need of peaceful relations with its neighbours to secure the stability and the construction of a new society, the situation in Iran was completely different. As we mentioned before, all Iranian officials proceeded from the need, and moreover the possibility, of "exporting the revolution", which was proper grounds for quarrelling with the others and with Iraq in particular. It is in Iran and not in Iraq that the proper atmosphere is set for developing the conflict into a state of war, because he who does not recognise the responsibility for the dangers besetting Iran — as is the case with its officials — is the one who will be plunged into the war without any accurate and responsible assessment of the consequences.

Let us raise another question. Which of the two parties could think of or rush into the war in a bid to ward off an internal

crisis by exporting it through an armed conflict with an external party? Could the political and economic situation in Iraq push the leadership to such a serious "adventure" in order to escape an insoluble internal crisis? Some information organs of certain so-called Arab parties and circles say this, but who will believe them?

The reality of the situation in Iraq reveals the power and the stability of the system in Iraq. It was further cemented and strengthened by President Saddam Hussein's official assumption of the leadership. Its internal, Arab and international position was also consolidated: the economy is healthy, the development is comprehensive, the growth in living standards is on the ascendancy, and the country's international relations are expanding, something that was highlighted by the preparations which were going on for holding the Opec Summit and by the fact that it is making preparations to host the next Non-Aligned Summit. A few months before the war, Iraq witnessed the elections of the first National Assembly after twelve years of the Revolution. During the war, Iraq witnessed last September the elections for the legislature of the Autonomous region. Could these be aspects of a crisis that could not be avoided but by exporting it in a war with Iran?

As for Iran, it has no integral constitutional institutions. Nobody knows the extent of the authority enjoyed by any government official or institution. The whole country lives under wide-scale political chaos, sharp quarrels between individuals and institutions, and almost total stagnation of the economy, and complete chaos in international relations. All the aspects of internal crisis exist in Iran in the worst possible way.

In such an atmosphere it is quite possible that the regime, or certain elements within it, would think of exporting crisis abroad even if it were by launching a war.

Chapter 2

Who was behind the war?

The second question is “Who was behind the war?” Who encouraged its conception and in whose interests did it take place?

Certain Arab and international circles accuse Iraq of launching the war on behalf of American imperialism in order to destroy the “Iranian Revolution” and subject it to American designs.

I am not going to dwell on this charge for it is too petty to discuss. States are like people in a village; each is known by his character, behaviour and opinions. The fool, the dishonest, the wise and the honest — each is well known. When one person makes a certain accusation against another, the honest and wise men of the village can fairly judge him.

However, there is some talk in certain international circles which carries only half the truth. To discuss it may be one of the ways to discover the truth about who was behind the war, who is making use of it, and why it has not come to an end.

That this war was launched with the encouragement of American imperialism, in order to bring about the proper conditions for the restoration of its control over Iran and the extension of its influence over the oil-rich area of the Arab Gulf, is a correct and plausible claim.

However, those who say so will not explain how and where this happened. They do this not out of a friendly attitude towards Iraq, for there are certain links between those who have made the first charge and those who make the second. If the latter group, who are more responsible than the first, were convinced and able to prove the claim that it was American imperialism which had encouraged Iraq to launch the war, they would have said so without any hesitation. But they know the truth, that America with its designs, and Iraq with its aims, stand worlds apart. Nevertheless, they do not voice the whole truth because regardless of the harm done to Iraq they do not want to make the Iranians angry simply because they seek certain interests in Iran.

However, the claim that American imperialism encouraged the war between Iraq and Iran should be clarified. Was the encouragement in Baghdad or in Tehran or in both?

When a state like the United States succeeds in encouraging another state like Iraq to engage in such a serious undertaking as war, it has to rely on certain ancient ties and objective grounds that enable it to achieve that success.

However, there have not even been any diplomatic relations between Iraq and the US for a long time. Relations have been tense throughout recent years. Until five years ago the US had been publicly promoting an internal insurgency against the Iraqi government. Iraq had been charged by the American press with the leadership of the rejection front and with the encouragement of "international terrorism". It was Iraq's initiative that brought about the Baghdad Summit to confront Camp David and to isolate Sadat.

The furthest point these relations had ever reached was Iraq's permission for American companies to take part in the execution of the huge development plan in Iraq. There are no American weapons in Iraq and Iraq has no deposits or holdings in America. America has no contact in Iraq with individuals or with cultural and economic institutions, nor are there any other similar channels to facilitate dealings between the two countries in such serious issues as the preparation of war.

The leadership of Iraq is not so foolish as to engage in a war with a country three times larger in size and population; a country bordering a big power, the Soviet Union; a country that has raised the banner of a self-styled Islamic revolution, only because this leadership had allegedly been acquainted with certain reports by American Intelligence that presented the war to them in a favourable light, or because an anti-Khomeini politician or officer or a local pro-American state misinformed Iraq about the likely outcome of the war.

This might be feasible if Iraq lacked a leadership and capable institutions. With these elements available and well known to everyone, it would be foolish to imagine such a possibility.

Why, then, should Iraq accept America's "encouragement" to engage in war with Iran? If it is fighting for its occupied territories and the Shatt-al-Arab, Iraq is in no need of "encouragement" because this fight is a national objective that any patriotic leadership will seek at the proper time and by the appropriate means. If it were fighting for "Arabistan", the policy of the US is quite clear, as previously mentioned.

If we disregard the publicly-known principles and policies of Iraq and deal only with these objective facts, as well as with another significant one, namely that the main bulk of Iraqi armament is of Soviet origin, could Iraq accept American encouragement to use Soviet arms in a war against a country using American armaments?

Those who propose this ambiguous "analysis" of the war imagine that they can make it credible under a thick smoke-screen of endless accusations launched in the region, without being challenged with logic and tangible evidence. But they are mistaken. Despite the spread of falsification, lies and deceit in the area, there are still some people who could present evidence which should clarify the issue.

But what is the other part of the truth that the proponents of this "analysis" have hidden, as a friendly gesture to Iran, in the hope of gaining something in Tehran? It is that this "encouragement" took place in Tehran and not in Baghdad. In Tehran there is more than one objective motive and more than one of the proper conditions for the occurrence of such "encouragement", whereas in Baghdad there is not a single objective motive nor any of the proper conditions.

How is this? The situation in Iran and the nature of the existing trends carry the answer. In Iran there are three main conflicting trends, yet they are at the same time intricately tied to each other. No one of them could ever settle this internal conflict to its advantage prior to the eruption of war with Iraq. These trends are: religious figures and their followers; Western-oriented civilian politicians; and groups connected with America in one way or another, including some elements in the Iranian army.

In Iran there are no state institutions integrated under a central system to exercise control over various fields of information and policy. In such an atmosphere of disintegration and internecine fighting lies the best opportunity for direct and indirect penetration by foreign powers, especially those with deep roots in Iranian society.

It is true that the Shah and the American advisers left the country, and that the American Embassy staff were taken hostage, but America is still present everywhere in Iran. Intricate ties exist in the army, culture, economy and in personal relationships, as an objective reality resulting from the close relations under the Shah. Iran cannot get rid of this aspect without long years of careful work under a stable and capable

leadership realising this target and seriously working towards it.

The religious figures were ready to instigate conflict with Iraq. When they assumed office in Iran they had already established as a target the overthrow of the government in Iraq. Therefore, they would be in no need of encouragement after their takeover. Moreover, they were convinced of the availability of practical means to realise this target.

This conviction came through three channels. The first was the politico-religious opposition groups in Iraq, especially the "Al-Da'wa Party", whose leaders went to Tehran and Qum immediately after the revolution of Iran and kept close to its religious and political officials, persistently putting their case to them that conditions in Iraq were almost ripe for the overthrow of the government and that Iran had only to extend financial, military and propaganda aid to these groups and to start a conflict in Iraq. Certain sabotage operations organised by these religious groups and carried out by Iranian agents in Iraq gave encouragement to religious figures and some politicians in Iran who persisted in their erroneous and miscalculated attitude. They thought what was said to them was true.

Secondly, the American, Zionist and some Western propaganda media had been giving much attention to alleged sectarian contradictions in Iraq and describing the nationalist system of Iraq in a certain sectarian way. These organs concentrated on false reports of alleged activities by the so-called religious opposition, the insurgent Kurdish groups, and even by Communists.

Reading these materials no doubt consolidated the convictions and the rashness of the religious figures in Iran, encouraging them to instigate conflict with Iraq and even launch war against it.

Thirdly, certain Arab regimes and circles exploited the anti-Iraq attitude of the leaders of Iran and instigated them against the Iraqi Government so as to avenge themselves against it.

On the other hand, the Western-oriented intelligentsia in Iran is divided into two categories; the members of the first have no relations with America or the West, but out of opportunism they wanted to jump on the bandwagon by flattering the religious figures in order to gain certain positions of authority. They thought the concentration on hostility towards Iraq would

be a profitable undertaking in the new system of Iran. Hence they embarked on a rash competition, instigating animosity and hostility against Iraq and underestimating its power with no consideration whatsoever for the consequences.

The other category of Western-oriented politicians connected with America and the West is that of the military men, who know what to do.

All those in Iran who had connections with America knew that the conflict with Iraq was a good opportunity for them, for it would divert the new regime in Iran away from the tasks of building a new society, and exhaust it. When this conflict developed into war, then America would be the No. 1 issue in Tehran: the arms were American, the military ideology was American, the technical know-how was American and everything in the war would be American.

Besides, the Iraqis would use Soviet arms in the war, so there would be a great chance to discredit the Soviet Union and its internationally known arms, such as the Mig, T55, T62, T72, Sam, the Kalashnikov and others, while the Phantom, F14, Hawk and Tow would be very dear to the Iranians who would fight in the name of "Islamic revolution".

This was exactly what the members of this category sought for a long time. They insisted fervently on escalating the conflict with Iraq and underestimating its military and political power. In April 1980 the head of the regime in Iran, Bani-Sadr, said in a speech: "If Iraqis commit provocative acts against our western borders I will not be able to stop the Iranian army's march towards Baghdad." He added that Iraq had three times sought mediation with Iran to solve the conflict but it was he who had refused these attempts.

Despite all the underlying feeling of hostility towards the Iranian army that the Iranian masses had nurtured throughout their struggle against the former regime and its institutions, those who held influential positions in the government and the army started to raise the subject of rebuilding the army and meeting its requirements. Haughty statements made by Iranian military commanders began to take a leading position in the Iranian propaganda media. Most of these statements were made concerning the power of the Iranian army to confront the alleged danger coming from Iraq.

Thus for many months each of the three parties, quarrelling for power in Iran, had been instigating the other against Iraq. The religious figures wanted to realise certain religious

positions in Iraq; the opportunist politicians wanted to take advantage of the situation; the military figures, who were overshadowed by the religious figures and the Revolutionary Guards, found in the war a precious opportunity to consolidate the positions they had already lost under the Revolution.

In such an atmosphere, the "encouragement" took place in Tehran and not in Baghdad, a stable and quiet capital under national and coherent leadership, vigilant institutions, and great capability of clarification, calculation, analysis and deduction.

But why is not the whole truth put forward?

To say half the truth is an offence to Iraq. However, this is not important, since Iraq is for national independence. On 8 February 1980, President Saddam Hussein called for the departure of all forms of foreign bases and presence from the Arab Homeland. He also called for abandoning the use of force in Arab disputes — and thereby to establish a coherent and independent Arab family. This of course will not please those who seek influence in the Arab Homeland even if it paved the way for others' influence. To divide influence and distribute shares will be beneficial to them because to gain a piece of the big cake, the Arab Homeland, is much better than having none of it when it is rightly restored to its own people.

Meanwhile, to say half the truth will not offend Iranians, for in Iran the whole truth is confused. Those who harbour the above-mentioned claim do not accurately know where "the American Satan" lies. Is it in the turbans of certain religious figures or in the coats of certain politicians with European languages, or under the helmets of some military men?

However, it would now be advisable not to offend any of these people, while at the same time keeping watch on this peculiar combination of individuals to see what will come of it.

Chapter 3

A long or a short war?

Some Arab and international quarters claim that Iraq, fearing the possible "export of Iranian revolution" to it, had started the war against Iran with the aim of overthrowing its regime, and that Iraq met in this pursuit with the designs of American imperialism and of some local states that were aimed at overthrowing "the Islamic Revolution". They also claim that Iraq has failed to achieve this aim so it "involved" itself in a most prolonged and costly war.

Those who promote such allegations ignore an essential fact of life: that an "immature revolution" cannot be exported to a country that has a mature one. They also ignore the fact that Iraq is not living under an old and decadent royal regime or under a capitalist one that is wholly engaged in exploitation and corruption, so as to facilitate the export to it of a "revolution" that has not yet settled even in its own country and whose political, economic, cultural and organisational aspects and achievements are not yet known.

Did Khomeini build a welfare state in Iran — whereby rights were given to the Iranian peoples, modern revolutionary institutions consolidated, living standards raised, justice enforced — so as to export his revolution to a country like Iraq which enjoys economic prosperity, political stability and a revolutionary and socialist system under a great popular Party with rich experience during decades of struggle?

It is easy to make accusations and false interpretations. But they will not stand against facts. The Revolution of July 1968 has transformed Iraq from one stage to another over the past twelve years. Iraq was weak and became strong; it was divided and became united; it was backward and became advanced; and it was poor and became rich.

Iraq, which had no effective role in Arab affairs and in the international community, became one of the most influential Arab countries, if not the most influential one, in all political, economic and cultural domains. It has acquired a prominent international role.

How, therefore, could such a country be invaded by Khomeini's revolution, which is, to say the least, immature. Iraq had no apprehension of the so-called "export of revolution". This fact has been well evidenced by the course of the war (with Iran) itself. Since the outbreak of war the difference between the situation in Iraq and that in Iran has become most obvious. In Iraq there is a strong army, united political leadership, united people close to its leadership, while in Iran there is a weak army and economy, disintegrated political leadership and divided people with internal divisions, conflicts and uprisings. How, then, could Iran in such a miserable condition export its "revolution" to Iraq which is enjoying all these conditions?

According to the promoters of this accusation or interpretation, the so-called danger of "exporting the Iranian revolution" would pose a threat not only to Iraq but also to other countries in the region, and to the imperialist interests. Why should Iraq, therefore, fight the war alone to liquidate the "Iranian Revolution" on behalf of all these parties without getting them to join it in the war? Was Iraq a poor country, with men and no wealth, so as to make its men play the role of mercenaries and fight in defence of threatened thrones and regimes, and of imperialist interests? Was it not Iraq that had been offering aid to poor Arab countries? Was it not Iraq that promoted the idea of the Arab Development Decade and was one of the main contributors to it? Was it not Iraq that offered aid to Third World countries such as Vietnam, Mozambique, Zambia, Cuba, Madagascar, and others?

How could, then, a country producing more than three million barrels of oil a day, and embracing a development plan that has been depicted by the world press as the biggest in the Third World countries, become an "agent" fighting on behalf of certain Arab regimes and in defence of the interests of American imperialism?

Elaborating the same interpretation, these circles would say that the "revolution" in Iran had threatened the government in Iraq by a sectarian means, so the Iraqi Government waged the war against Iran in order to face this threat.

It is true that Khomeini's regime has been working on instigating sectarian conflicts in Iraq and the Arab Homeland. However, did these people — including those of Arab nationality who refrain from giving details — ask themselves in whose interest the sectarian strife is instigated? Does it serve

the struggle against the interests of American imperialism and against the Zionist entity?

I shall not elaborate this point now, for I might come back to it later on. But one of the self-evident facts in the Arab Homeland is that dividing the Arab nation into separate countries and on regional, sectarian and tribal bases has posed a serious threat to the unity of the Arab nation, being one of the main factors that facilitated the colonialist powers' task of extending their hegemony over the Arab Homeland. It has also been one of the essential factors of the establishment of the Zionist entity in Palestine, of its continuous usurpation of the Arab territories, and of its continuous serious threat to the Arab Nation.

If Khomeini's regime aims at dividing Iraq on a sectarian basis under the guise of "exporting the revolution" to it, then Iraq will unquestionably have the right and bear the responsibility on both local and Arab national levels to fight it.

If the Arab promoters of these charges were really true Arabs, anxious to liquidate the imperialist interests and to fight to liberate Palestine, they should have been on the front lines fighting with their Iraqi brothers and not in the opposite trench of Khomeini, the promoter of sectarian conflicts.

It is quite legitimate to defend national unity against any external hostile attempt, even if this could lead to an open war until the trouble and its source be liquidated.

However, had Iraq been in need of a long or a short and lightning war to liquidate this "trouble"? If Iraq were afraid of Khomeini's influence on a large section of its sons which could push them to rise against its nationalist, socialist and revolutionary system, would it be the right solution to engage the army that is composed of all citizens, including those whose uprising Iraq allegedly fears, in war against the source of "inspiration"?

If this fear actually existed, war would be a step towards suicide and not towards salvation.

The engagement of Iraq in the war with Iran and its deployment of tens of thousands of its armed forces composed of citizens of various sects and communities — Arabs and Kurds of Muslim and Christian religions — are the best evidence that the danger supposedly posed by "Khomeini's revolution" to the situation in Iraq is a mere fallacy and not a fact. Otherwise, how could the Iraqi army — composed of all these citizens — fight courageously and efficiently on a front of hundreds of kilometres? How could it realise prominent victories and enjoy

such high morale?

A government faced by internal dissent would not make war abroad because it would escalate and not ease the internal tension. Such a government would be in need of army, police, and militia to "suppress the dissent" inside. How could it, therefore, send them abroad and to a front hundreds of kilometres away in such alleged conditions?

As for the other allegations that Iraq had planned for a rapid and lightning war that would ensure the fall of the Iranian regime, we wonder first who introduced the term of a rapid and lightning war to Arab life and consequently to the Arab political vocabulary. Were they not some of the promoters of this petty charge? Such a term did not exist in the history of serious and real wars.

If it is a serious war it cannot be rapid and lightning. However, "leaders" like Assad and Sadat have introduced to Arab life and to the Arab political vocabulary the method of rapid and lightning war. In June 1967 Assad, then Syrian Minister of Defence, surrendered Quneitra to Israel even before the arrival of its invading forces while in Sinai the Egyptian Government ceased fighting after six days, merely because the Zionist enemy started striking at Egyptian air bases. Thus for the first time in the history of the Arabs and many other nations we came across a model of "rapid and lightning war" just because the Zionist enemy had established its superiority for six days.

In 1973 Assad and Sadat had only fought for two weeks, then started looking for a ceasefire. The fighting was halted at a time when Egyptian forces had already crossed the Suez Canal to the east while the Zionist forces had crossed it to the west.

As for Assad, he emerged from this war retreating backwards a few kilometres. Thus we saw another example of the "rapid and lightning war".

If Assad and Sadat gave bad examples of the leaders who adopted this type of war without any tangible results on the battle zones, who said that this type has become the basis of Arab life?

What is happening in Iraq is something different. Iraqi experience is not like the Syrian and Egyptian experience. Saddam Hussein is not like Sadat or Assad. In Iraq, a strong, independent and serious experience with a firm will is being built; and Saddam Hussein is a historical leader who draws lessons from the great facts in the life of his people and nation, taking into account the prospects of the remote future. Hence

Iraq could not follow the "rapid and lightning war" and plan such an alleged war, only to find later that it was neither rapid nor lightning.

Looking at Iran's size and knowing its population, no one could make the false assessment that war with it could be rapid and lightning, and that with a magical strike such a war could overthrow the regime in Tehran. Besides, Iraq is more acquainted with the size of Iran's military build-up than any other country in the region, for geographical reasons as well as those concerning its long conflict with the former Shah of Iran. It is true that the Shah and the American advisers left Iran and that a number of Iranian officers were killed after Khomeini's takeover, but the Shah did not take with him hundreds of tanks, artillery, rockets, planes and other most modern American arms. These remained in Iran. Anyone who contemplates fighting a war with Iran should think of the size of these arms at the very least, if not of their quality too.

It is quite logical to say that if the objective of the war is to "overthrow the Iranian regime" the means will be a long war and not a rapid and lightning one, especially if we take into account the size of Iran and its population, which are more than three times those of Iraq. Could the leadership in Baghdad, therefore, believe that the occupation of several Iranian towns on the borders and the siege of Dezful, Ahwaz and Abadan would lead to the fall of the Iranian regime in a few days?

It is quite logical to say that if the objective were to overthrow the regime in Iran, Iraq had to occupy either the whole of Iran or most of its territory, or else it had to wage a long war that would drain Iran's resources and wait for the interaction of the political, economic and psychological aspects of the war until the fall of its regime.

The advocates of this silly interpretation contradict themselves by first inventing an objective for Iraq, then by creating a means that Iraq used to no avail and then by concluding that Iraq has failed or become involved in troubles. No Iraqi official made a statement before or during the war to the effect that Iraq was aiming at overthrowing or changing the regime in Iran, whereas all Iranian officials from Khomeini, Bani-Sadr and Rajai to the humblest followers of the regime have been announcing over the past two years that their objective has been the overthrow of the Iraqi Government.

Which party, therefore, has failed to realise its objective? No Iraqi official put forward an official conclusion that war would

bring about the fall or the change of Iranian regime, even if this has realistically been a likely possibility, whereas all Iranian officials have kept on saying that war would bring about the fall of the Iraqi Government. Whose assessment, then, was mistaken?

Certain Arab and international circles interpreted Iraq's appeal for a ceasefire and negotiations as a result of frustration at the continuing war, since Iraq had at the outset planned for a brief one. Unfortunately these circles have been used to distortion as discussed previously. This appeal, rather, expressed the fact that Iraq had not planned for a short or a long war, and moreover that Iraq had no desire for war and did not start it. The war was forced on Iraq who, finding it inevitable, accepted the challenge and fought the war courageously and efficiently.

On 28 September 1980, after six days of the large-scale offensive mounted by Iraqi forces against Iran in which they reached vital military targets inside Iran and after Iran's military defeat was established, President Saddam Hussein called for Iran to recognise the rights of Iraq in the three Arab Gulf islands, Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tumbs; to renounce its expansionist ambitions; and to respect the relations of good neighbourliness with Iraq and the Arab nation. Obviously this appeal was made from a position of strength. The same applies to Iraq's other peaceful appeals that have followed, all of which were based on the same principles defined by President Saddam Hussein in his speech of 28 September 1980.

Does Iraq want the war to be short? The answer, no doubt, is yes. Who doesn't want war to be short unless he is mad or irresponsible or living on delusions?

In fact Iraq wants the war to finish quickly, because of its feeling of responsibility towards its people, its armed forces, the Arab nation and towards the security and safety of the area. However, Iraq does not say that it wants to end the war regardless of the price. It wants to end it according to the principles declared by President Saddam Hussein on 28 September. If the rulers of Iran are prepared to accept these principles, Iraq will be very happy for the end of the war. But if these rulers want to maintain their attitude, then let it be so.

Iraq was forced to engage in this war, but this doesn't mean that it is not able to continue fighting. Rather it has clearly established this ability. Moreover, calling for peace does not mean the failure to fight, and not starting the war does not

mean being unprepared for it and incapable of fighting it.

Iraq has made a remarkable example in the Arab life. While not starting aggression, Iraq promptly repelled it after it had become an inevitable reality, and while it did not plan for the war it had been fully prepared for it. This is very much so, because in Iraq a new experience is being built under the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party and President Saddam Hussein. It is strong, courageous and well-prepared for all eventualities. It also has a firm and decisive will as well as reason and wisdom. So Iraq is fully capable of facing up to all eventualities and well prepared for all options.

Chapter 4

Why was the war prolonged and how long will it continue?

Many circles wonder why the war was prolonged and how long it will continue. Some of those who are concerned about the continuity of the war wonder how long this bleeding will continue.

The war is a political and military act whose continuity depends on the relevant political and military factors. To begin with the military factor and related matters, we can simply say that if Iran were the size of Iraq and had the same size of population the course of fighting between 4 September 1980 and today would have been sufficient to inflict upon it an ultimate defeat.

However, Iran is a country of one million and a half square kilometres, while the battle zone does not exceed a few thousand square kilometres. When the political leadership in Tehran, hundreds of kilometres away from the battle zone, pretend not to see the military, political and economic facts produced so far by the battle and when this leadership does not recognise the actual defeat it suffered, the war might continue and a great part of Iran remains far away from its most direct and acute effects, even when the whole of Iran suffers today from its indirect effects.

As for Iran's military means, we must not forget what has been said about the Iranian army during the time of the Shah: that it was the fifth force in the world. Nor must we forget the sensational reports by the world press about the huge arms deals that the Shah concluded with America and other Western countries and even with the Soviet Union.

It is true that Iran's military power was at the beginning of the war with Iraq less than what it had been during the Shah's time with regard to military cadres, experts and technicians, and the effectiveness of certain complicated weapons. However, Iran was not militarily finished after the departure of the Shah. In fact, it retained its rather important military power in the area, which is not easy to destroy altogether.

What should be asserted here is that Iraq, which has militarily defeated Iran, is not at all prepared to lose its military forces by

continuing the war in a way that would lead in the end to the destruction of the entire military power of Iran. He who does this, as the Allies did with Nazi Germany, must be politically aiming at occupying Iran and leading an overall political change of its structure. Yet this has not been the aim of Iraq in the battle with Iran. Its aim, first of all, was to defend itself; secondly, to restore its rights; and thirdly, to prove in battle that it is stronger than Iran and fully capable of defeating it. And this is what Iraq has actually achieved.

The nature of the battle and the nationalist commitments of Iraq towards the Arab-Zionist conflict make it very keen on maintaining its military power and not draining it in this battle.

Despite the significance of the battle and of the need to emerge victorious from it, Iraq has to remain after the battle as the main military power in the Arab East. The Arab masses expect it to remain so.

Thus Iraq did not plan to fight the war in a way leading to the total destruction of the entire military power of Iran. This is possible if Iraq would be ready to lose an essential part of its military potential and if Iraq were not bound with basic nationalist commitments to the confrontation with the Zionist enemy.

Many people have spoken of the military technique used by Iraq in the battle. Some of them said Iraq has applied the Soviet combat theory characterised by slow motion. Others said Iraq at the start of the war made a swift incursion through surprising the Iranians, but failed to advance after Iran had reorganised its army and withstood the Iraqi attack.

These interpretations and claims are connected with the false allegations about Iraq's political objectives in the war, allegations which we have already discussed in a previous part of this series. The promoters of inaccurate views about the political side will hardly have an accurate analysis of the military one.

Obviously, there is no point for Iraq to continue the advance of its forces inside Iranian territories when its political objective in the war does not call for it. As for making an incursion or halting, these forces have proved their great capability of quickly reaching the targets assigned to them.

The advance of Iraqi forces inside Iranian territory started at dawn on 23 September 1980. On 28 September 1980, after five days of battle, these forces had already occupied the towns of Qasr Shireen and Mehran. They had also entered Muhammarah and reached the outskirts of Ahwaz, Dezful and Abadan, hence

controlling an area of more than 30,000 square kilometres inside Iranian territory, and have maintained this control ever since.

This area contains a lot of passes, high sandhills, hills, marshes and wide rivers such as the Carun and the Karkha. At each of these natural barriers there was resistance which was sometimes fierce. The towns occupied by Iraqi forces during that five-day period, such as Qasr Shireen and Mehran, were strongly fortified border-towns. These and others in Western Iran, such as Muhammarah and Abadan, were built as military forts. They were designed in this way according to a military plan drawn up and implemented by American experts.

When it was politically decided to enter and control Muhammarah the Iraqi armed forces entered it and courageously fought a successful urban battle.

Urban fighting, which is one of the most difficult types of fighting, is something new to the local armies in the area, including the Iraqi Army. However, when the Iraqi Army had to engage in such an experience it successfully carried it out. Throughout the following months of the battle Iranians tried several times to launch what they called a counter-offensive, but these attempts, including the last and the biggest on 5 January 1981, were crushed by the Iraqi forces.

Iraq has no propaganda promoters around the world. It is part of neither Western nor Eastern camps. Otherwise many information media would have applauded its military achievement, as when American, Zionist and Western media portrayed the easy victory achieved by the Zionist enemy in six days in 1967, over armies that did not fight, as a "military miracle" in modern warfare.

World Zionism has been working through all its effective means of information to cover up the military achievements of Iraq. To report these achievements would no doubt enhance the morale of the Arab armies and masses, to the disadvantage of the Zionist entity, which has since the 1967 aggression kept on propagating, by various means, its lies and myths about Zionist superiority over the Arabs not only in planning and running the battle but also in the fighters' morale and ability to use modern arms.

Certain pseudo-Arabs have endeavoured to complete the task of world Zionism in underestimating the Iraqi military achievements in the battle.

However, facts cannot be covered up for ever, and the remarkable achievements of the Iraqi Army in the battle against

Iran, with all its military, political and psychological aspects, shall be known today and tomorrow.

As for the Iraqi Army's combat theory, the circles which talk about it disregard an essential fact because of either ignorance or ill-will.

To say that the Iraqi Army has borrowed its military theory from a foreign party deliberately implies the failure of the Arab nation to have its own military theory. Certain pseudo-Arab leaders, who do not want to acknowledge this Iraqi achievement, repeat with the chorus this charge over Iraq's military theory.

The Iraqi Army is one of the oldest local armies in the region; a few days ago it celebrated its sixtieth anniversary. Ever since its foundation, Iraqi Army units have been named after famous Arab military leaders. Whenever one comes across an army unit or an air force base in Iraq, one will see it named after Khalid, or Sa'd, or Qa'qa', or Tareq, or Ali. In so doing, the Iraqi Army is not taking a superficial attitude. It is, rather, a demonstration of its deep concern throughout its history to learn and draw lessons from the glorious Arab military heritage.

Whenever the Iraqi Army was in a healthy state under nationalist officers, this concern was put into action in the field of building up the Arab military theory. Moreover this concern has occupied after the Revolution of 1968 a significant part of the activity of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party inside the Iraqi Armed Forces. For President Saddam Hussein, this issue has held a special priority.

The Iraqi Army has also been acquainted with Western and Eastern military science and theories. It interacted with both and with other international military sciences. The Iraqi Army, therefore, does not follow a military theory copied from abroad. It follows a theory of its own based on its rich military heritage and on the interaction with modern military theories and sciences. Hence the battle of Saddam's Qadissiya will be a good field to test this theory and a historical chance to develop it.

Zionist and suspect circles thought that, by circulating these allegations about the method of fighting adopted by the Iraqi Army, the leadership of Iraq would be drawn into uncalculated and undefined steps. But this will never happen. Saddam Hussein's leadership in Iraq could never be drawn into involvements under the blackmail of Zionist and suspect information media. It is a leadership that knows what it wants, and defines by its own free will the means to achieve its objectives.

To continue fighting means attrition. But what could be done?

On 24 December 1980, President Saddam Hussein told the Iraqi Cabinet that in time of war between Iraq and Iran, the present positions of Iraqi armed forces are the military borders; and if Iraq had to face an Iranian aggression it had better face it together with the state of attrition inside the Iranian territory and not on the borders between the two countries.

Admitting that the continuity of the battle would drain men, arms and resources, and would cause losses in property, we nevertheless have to elaborate on this point and explain its danger to the two warring parties. To talk about the state of attrition in absolute terms will give an inaccurate impression about the reality of war and its effects on both sides.

Iraq and Iran engaged in war with different positions. In Iraq there is political stability, economic prosperity, long experience and steady international relations, whereas in Iran there is political instability, economic crisis, inexperienced leaders and chaotic international relations.

Objectively speaking, the effects of war on Iraq will be confined to losses, but for Iran these effects will not be confined to losses. They will certainly lead to crises and disasters as indeed they have already done in the past few months.

The situation in Iraq is quite capable of absorbing the losses of war. Though the loss of men is quite saddening to any leadership concerned for its people, a middle-sized country like Iraq could realistically offset it.

Iraq has not yet used all its human resources in the war. It is still dealing with war in a balanced manner. As for Iran, despite the fact that its population is several times the Iraqi population, the compensation of the soldiers' losses is more difficult because of the relative weakness in mobilisation and more particularly the weakness in training.

Economically, Iraq was in a solid position when it entered the war and was able to maintain this situation thanks to its resources, experience, and Arab and international relations. Such an established position is not expected to change however long the war may be drawn out.

But in Iran the situation is quite different. Economic crisis and chaos existed before the war. The production of Iranian oil went down to less than a fifth of its previous level. The war only escalated this crisis and chaos. However much the arrogant Iranian leaders tried to ignore economic facts in Iran, they would not be able to continue this indifference indefinitely. The continuous decline in the economic situation in Iran is badly

affecting the military power, and in consequence the political and psychological position as well.

Iraq has made a great advantage of its stable, balanced and wide international relations in meeting the military and economic demands of the war and in the political running of the war, whereas Iran has totally failed in this regard. Though Iranian officials have not yet considered this question, it does not mean that it has had no effect on the situation in Iran and has not been reflected in the battle zones.

All these factors, therefore, make the continuity of war lead to "losses" for Iraq, as for Iran they will certainly lead to further crises and disasters.

How long will the Iranian rulers endure such a situation? No sensible observer could tell, because Iranian affairs are hardly assessed with logic and sense. However, this position will not go on indefinitely. Basic facts of life have to prevail finally.

Certain Arab and international quarters tried to delude others that the situation in Iran might considerably change after the solving of the American Embassy hostages issue and the flow of blocked funds to Iran. Some other quarters thought that a change from within or from outside the Iranian regime would tip the balance to Iran's advantage against Iraq.

We do not deny the effect of these factors on the political and economic situation but, objectively speaking, they will not lead to essential and swift changes.

What occurred in Iran after Khomeini's assumption of power was not a rift that can be bridged in a few weeks. Neither was it a shortage that can be offset in a few days or weeks or even months. It is a state of fragmentation that cannot be treated without a long and hard process, without the presence of rational and efficient political leaders, and without the availability of proper objective factors.

Those "leaders" who think that they can change the existing situation in the war with Iraq within a short period after solving the hostages issue will be frustrated by the objective facts and will expose their country to more crises and disasters if they opt to continue fighting with a view to change the status quo in the conflict between Iraq and Iran. They will also commit a sin against their country, no less than that committed by Khomeini when he shaped Iran's approach to basic issues emerging after its revolution, especially its relations with Iraq and the Arab nation, with bitterness, backwardness and shortsightedness.

What are the basic factors, however, that make Iranian rulers

persist in denying defeat, in continuing the war and in rejecting Iraq's peaceful appeals?

The main problem of the present situation in Iran is that all the Iranian leaders including Khomeini have, since their assumption of power, launched many slogans and committed themselves to many obligations towards each other and towards the Iranian masses. These obligations were very much beyond their actual ability.

The second problem lies in the conflict and division among these leaders. They do not even have a chance to view the situation in Iran rationally and responsibly in order to reassess their calculations and to redefine their previous slogans and commitments in a way corresponding to their actual position and resources.

In fact these two problems lead them to more delusions and will further push them towards the abyss instead of taking advantage of the war towards more rational and objective policy.

Certain quarters thought that war would unify the conflicting leading groups in Iran. However, this consideration was soon frustrated. After a short period of superficial solidarity between the rulers in Tehran, deep differences arose again, taking the form of a sharp conflict.

In such an atmosphere of conflict a leader or group can hardly talk in a rational or objective way because of fearing the demagoguery of others. Hence they are forced to resort to a process in which each tries to outbid the other. This is what has actually been happening in Iran since the war. Each fears the other might charge him with cowardice and negligence so he talks in a more extreme manner than the others. Now "extremist" and "more extremist" have become the usual terms in evaluating Iranian leaders instead of "extremist" and "moderate" as used by certain political and press circles.

From such unobjective attitudes, Iraq's share was the biggest. Before the war and during its early stages the Iranian leaders underestimated the political and military power of Iraq and issued threats and made statements so that it has now become almost impossible for them to acknowledge the realities of the situation.

They promised the Iranians that they were able to crush the Iraqis. Bani-Sadr said once he could not stop his forces from marching to Baghdad if they moved to the west. The Iranian Chief of Staff said the Iraqi Army was only an insect in front of the Iranian Army, the huge dragon. The Minister of Defence,

Fakuri, said at the beginning of the war that Iraq would be wiped off the map.

As for the religious figures, they were telling the Iranian masses that Almighty God was with them and would help them achieve victory over Iraq. They circulated fabrications and legendary reports about an uprising by the Iraqi people against the government and about a revolt of military units against the leadership in Iraq, etc.

How could Khomeini, Bani-Sadr, the Chief of Staff, the Minister of Defence, the religious clergy and others, therefore, face the peoples of Iran today and admit that their assessments were mistaken, that Iraq is strong, that its system is strong, and that they are neither able to drive the Iraqi forces away nor capable of changing the Iraqi system?

If they were united with no personal or political differences they might have been able to admit this, or at least part of it. But since they are fighting each other and set out to undermine each other, they are not expected to say the truth or to deal with it. Hence they behave with stubbornness and arrogance and maintain their unobjective position until Almighty God may settle a matter that has already been ordained.

This is why all mediators from international bodies have so far failed to get a defined and reasonable political position from the Iranian side in order to help reach a peaceful settlement, whereas the Iraqi position has been very clear and simple. Any political solution will not be reached without the availability of two essential factors in Iran, in the same way as they have been available in Iraq, namely the unity of political leadership and an objective and accurate understanding of the real situation on the political, military and economic levels. These essential conditions precede many other factors. But before the provision of these two elements — and they are not available now in Iran — the political solution remains very difficult.

Chapter 5

The Iraq-Iran conflict and the Arab-Zionist conflict

The criticism by certain Arab parties of Iraq's engagement in the war with Iran, and the open siding of some of these parties with Iran, seem to have been based on the assumption that the war could eventually lead to one or all of the following results:

1. That Iraq would be weakened and consequently leave the field of confrontation with the Zionist enemy.
2. That the Palestinian cause would recede in the world's interest into a secondary position.
3. That the Arabs would lose Iran as an ally in their struggle against the Zionist enemy and imperialism.

But could the Iraq-Iran conflict weaken Iraq and badly affect its role in the confrontation with the Zionist enemy? And have the parties — who warned against this allegedly expected result and showed a great concern for the role of Iraq in this confrontation — acted in a manner indicative of this concern with regard to the Iraqi-Iranian conflict?

However, regardless of the influence of the conflict on this role — which we shall deal with later — we may discover the real intentions of these parties by viewing their own positions towards the conflict. In this attempt, we shall deal with those member-states and organisations of the "Confrontation and Steadfastness Front".

All the members of this Front have been aware of the anti-Iraq attitude by the new regime in Iran ever since the assumption of power by Khomeini and his group.

One of these parties, the Syrian regime, had even been acquainted with the Iranian hostile attitude towards Iraq at a time Syria was tied to Iraq by a charter of nationalist action which was presumably a step towards the unity of the two countries. This fact should obviously make any hostile attitude towards Iraq the same for Syria.

However, all the members of the "Confrontation and Steadfastness Front" in the beginning ignored the hostility of the Iranian regime to Iraq. The Syrian regime had even been very

keen on strengthening the bilateral relations with Iran especially at that time.

The dispute between Iraq and Iran started to develop: propaganda campaigns, sabotage and terrorist activities in Iraq, and border clashes until the situation finally developed into open war in September 1980. What had these parties done, for more than a year and a half, to contain this dispute as a demonstration of their concern for Iraq's role in the Arab-Zionist conflict?

Not one of the members of the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front except the Palestine Liberation Organisation made any effort to stop the Iraq-Iran dispute. Of all these parties only Mr Yasir Arafat tried once to speak to the arrogant Iranians. They not only refused to listen to him but expressed surprise at his words, assuming that the Palestine Liberation Organisation had to side with them against Iraq.

The members of this Front, namely Syria, Algeria, Libya and other organisations of the same orientation, were trying by every possible means to strengthen their relations with Iran and to display every sign of admiration and flattery to the new regime. These parties had not exerted a single effort at that time to advise Iran against rehashing the Shah's policy of diverting Iraq from its nationalist Arab duties. At least two of these parties had shown a clear political and information bias towards Iran in its feud with Iraq.

Could, therefore, a critical attitude towards Iraq, based on the assumption that the conflict with Iran would weaken its role in the confrontation with the Zionist enemy, be termed an expression of Arab nationalist concern, while the advocates of this attitude themselves made no effort at all to contain this conflict and save Iraq from its harmful effects?

He who is concerned for Iraq's role in the Arab-Zionist conflict should first be concerned for Iraq itself. How could a concern for Iraq possibly be combined with indifference to its interests? Such an attitude means, at the very least, that its advocates are only seeking a pretext for not supporting Iraq. As for others, they certainly use this unconvincing pretext as a justification for working against Iraq and making alliances with Iran. Could such an attitude, therefore, contribute to the "Steadfastness" against the Zionist enemy and to the "Confrontation" with it?

During the Shah's time there had been a conflict between Iraq and Iran. The Shah, according to all the members of the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front, was an American agent, an ally of the Zionist entity and an enemy of the Arabs. But had

these parties, that later formed this Front, supported Iraq against the Shah's Iran even in words, so that we might understand their attitudes towards Iraq — ranging from non-support to hostility — now that Iran has supposedly become allied to the Arabs and opposed to the Zionists?

During the period from 1969 to 1975 no member of this Front even issued a statement denouncing the Shah's Iran for its provocations against Iraq, for interfering in its internal affairs and for supporting Barazani's movement, whose connections with the United States and the Zionist enemy were established. Rather, these states and organisations were critical of Iraq exactly as they are today accusing it of "involving" itself with the Kurdish question and the dispute with Iran at the expense of its role in the conflict with the Zionist enemy.

Except for Libya, which launched press campaigns against the Shah's regime, the member-states of the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front were very keen on establishing good relations with the Shah's regime. Syria, in particular, was very anxious to have good relations with this regime. In May 1974 the Syrian regime got a \$150m loan free of interest from the Shah's regime after a visit to Tehran in March 1974 by the then Minister of Foreign Trade, Mr Mohammed Al-Imadi, at a time when the Iraq-Iran conflict had reached a peak. The only logical conclusion about these attitudes towards Iran, under the regimes of both the Shah and Khomeini, is that the policies of the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front members towards Iraq, its national interests and security, and its role in the Palestinian question have been a mere reflection of their attitude towards the Iraqi Government.

These parties did not support Iraq against the Shah's Iran as nationalist considerations would demand, and similarly they have not supported Iraq against Khomeini's Iran. In both cases they used as a pretext Iraq's role in the Palestinian question.

In fact certain members of the Front deal with Iran according to considerations related to their individual countries' interests rather than to pan-Arab nationalist interests. This anti-nationalist attitude was applied to the regimes of both the Shah and Khomeini. At the same time they were calling on Iraq to absolutely ignore its national interests, under the pretext of concern for its role in the Arab-Zionist conflict.

These parties had not felt the nationalist responsibility of supporting Iraq during the Shah's time because their own individual countries' interests and not the Arab nationalist ones

or those of the struggle against the Zionist enemy — as said today — would not require this.

But when Iraq demands its own legitimate national interests and those of the Arab nation from Iran, these parties would not hesitate to charge it with weakening the Arab nationalist position against the Zionist enemy.

He who argues for the Arab nationalist position has to be first a nationalist himself. It is illogical for those who proceed from a regional and non-nationalist attitude to judge Iraq's position from an Arab-nationalist criterion.

This does not apply only to some Arab regimes but also to certain Palestinian organisations which could not think of the war but in terms of supposedly bringing the Palestinian cause down to a secondary position. Could this be a pan-Arab nationalist or rather a regional position? Is it reasonable to ask Iraq from an Arab nationalist position to mobilise all its human, military and economic resources for the Palestinian cause while criticising Iraq on the ground that it will weaken this cause when it is forced to repel the aggression launched against it by Iran?

Could such a manner be related to Arab nationalism and the common Arab destiny? We ask those who talk about the Iraq-Iran conflict and criticise the Iraqi position to identify themselves. Who are they and whom do they represent? From which ideology do they proceed?

If they are really nationalists, there are certain values for Arab nationalism according to which our and their attitudes can be judged by each other. If they are internationalists, then it would not be difficult to deal with them. But if they are regionally and not nationally oriented in both ideology and policies, they will not be entitled to speak about Arab nationalism because nationalist responsibilities are up to nationalists alone.

As for the second assumption, that the dispute will lead to losing Iran from the battle against the Zionist enemy, one has to dwell on some objective facts.

Iran's role in the conflict with the Zionist enemy had been up to the outbreak of hostilities between Iraq and Iran a mere supposition and not a reality. It had been merely based on statements and promises which might or might not materialise.

But Iraq's role in the Arab-Zionist conflict is not a mere supposition. It has been concretely established since 1948. Iraq has always been taking part in the armed conflict with the Zionist enemy, in addition to its political, economic and information

contributions.

After the withdrawal of Egypt from the battle of confrontation against the Zionist enemy in the aftermath of the Camp David Accords, Iraq has indeed become the major military power of confrontation. According to all assessments, no successful military confrontation against the Zionist enemy is possible without the effective participation of Iraq.

The October War of 1973 proved beyond doubt that had it not been for Iraq's swift and effective participation, the Syrian Front would have collapsed despite the participation of Egypt with all its military weight and despite the fact that Iraq was kept out of the Egyptian and Syrian leaders' plans for that war.

In practical terms it would be useful to add an Iranian role to these of the Arab countries in the Arab-Zionist conflict if only Iran really had an effective role in this conflict. But when the Iranian regime presents its supposed role in a way that does away with the role of Iraq, with all its size and actual importance, could it be acceptable to side with Iran against Iraq in the current war under a pretext of concern for not losing Iran's role in the Arab-Zionist conflict? And could this be acceptable, especially from Syria, whose territory is occupied by the Zionist entity and whose ruler has to liberate it in response to a Syrian national duty rather than even an Arab nationalist one, and from certain Palestinian organisations that have sung the same tune?

According to which approach were such attitudes taken? Certainly it was not the Arab nationalist approach.

Even from a practical political point of view there is no ground for such a pro-Iran and anti-Iraq bias.

The only interpretation of such positions by Syrian and certain Palestinian organisations is that they have given their hatred of the system in Iraq priority not only over the supreme Arab national interest but also over the national interests of their own individual occupied countries.

By taking such a position they not only encroach upon Arab nationalism but even on Syrian patriotism and Palestinian patriotism.

Those who refer to the Iraqi role in the Arab-Zionist conflict, fearing that the Iraq-Iran conflict will badly affect it, have to be specific as to which kind of Iraq they refer to.

States and entities are not abstract cases to deal with regardless of their own characteristics. So Iraq would have different roles in the Arab-Zionist conflict according to its situation under various circumstances. The same applies to Syria, Egypt and

others, or else could the role of Egypt under Abdul Nasser be the same as under Sadat?

Iraq can take an effective role in the Arab-Zionist conflict only under a system of government that is first of all nationalist, and secondly stable and strong, and thirdly capable of mobilising all Iraq's political, human, military and economic resources. Without such a system of government it is pointless to talk about an important and an effective role for Iraq in the Arab-Zionist conflict.

It was during the period of Abdul Rahman Arif's regime in Iraq that the Zionist aggression of 1967 was launched. Arif's regime had been a self-styled ally and friend of the Egyptian regime, officially supporting it and Syria against the Zionist entity. Nevertheless it failed to get its forces to the frontlines before the ceasefire.

But in 1973 Iraq, under the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party, moved its forces to the Syrian front on the second day of the battle and took an effective part in the fighting, defending this front from falling to the Zionist enemy.

It is, therefore, impossible to separate the role of an Arab country from its own situation.

Some people might be pleased with the nature of the Iraqi Government. Others might not. But what really matters is whether the present system in Iraq affords the basic conditions for taking an effective part in the confrontation with the Zionist enemy. The answer is categorically yes, irrespective of the attitude towards its government.

It is all the more worthy of note that the Iraq-Iran dispute has not been a political feud or an ideological argument. Iran's new rulers have since their assumption of power made their main objective the overthrow of the Government in Iraq and the subjection of this country at least — if not all the eastern Arab countries — to the Iranian experiment.

Could such an objective, therefore, serve the consolidation of Iraq's role in the Arab-Zionist conflict?

In a previous series published in April and May 1980 (and included in this book) I presented a view of the future of Iraq and the entire Arab East with regard to the Arab-Zionist conflict if this area were to be invaded by Khomeini's experiment. It is simply that the countries of this area would be weakened militarily, economically and politically. Naturally this means the impairment of the basic factors that enable Iraq to take an effective part in the conflict with the Zionist enemy.

Such a case was exactly what happened in Iran after Khomeini came to office. Therefore, an external demonstration for Khomeini's experiment (in the Arab countries) will not produce a better result than Iran has so far given.

The Arab parties which levelled this charge against Iraq have considered the Iranian policy towards the Government of Iraq as a subject confined to bilateral relations without responsibly viewing the actual bearing of this policy upon the role of Iraq in the Arab-Zionist conflict.

Moreover, certain members of the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front, namely the Syrian and Libyan regimes and certain organisations, have followed the Iranian regime in calling for the overthrow of the Iraqi Government. Could such an attitude, therefore, express any concern for the role of Iraq in the Arab-Zionist conflict?

Once the war between Iraq and Iran broke out, how did those who claim concern for Iraq's role in the Arab-Zionist conflict behave towards the war?

The Syrian national duty before the Arab nationalist one calls for the Syrian regime to liberate its territory which has been occupied for more than thirteen years. In this task it would obviously be in need of Iraq's military power exactly as was the case in 1973, or even more, particularly after the withdrawal of Egypt from the military confrontation, following the Camp David Accords.

However, this regime sided openly with Iran against Iraq. It has even extended military support to Iran in this war.

Its press gloats over the Iraqi army's losses and Iran's alleged victories in the war.

Whatever the hatred against its government may be, and whatever consequences Iraq may afterwards face as a result of the war, could this be an Arab nationalist attitude based on concern for the role of Iraq in the Arab struggle against Zionism?

If Iraq were to lose the war — something which the alliance of Syria and Iran should obviously aim at — Iraqi military power would be destroyed. Could this be in the interests of the Syrian regime if it were nationalist, as it claims, and if it wanted to liberate at least its occupied Golan Heights?

As for Algeria, it claims that it has adopted a neutral attitude towards the Iraq-Iran conflict based on the consideration that Iraq is an Arab country and Iran is a Muslim country. Hence its opposition to their dispute under similar pretexts to those already referred to. But was Algeria really neutral? We do not want to

accuse it of bias but there are many questions to be raised in this respect.

In the issue of the Tehran American Embassy hostages, Algeria exceptionally exerted unflagging diplomatic efforts to help solve this very complex question. But did Algeria exert similar efforts before the outbreak of the war between Iraq and Iran with a view to making both "friendly" countries avoid its harmful consequences? And what does solving the hostages issue imply?

The Iranian regime has been reiterating the claim that it was fighting America through the hostages issue and hence it was punishing America for its policies towards Iran under the Shah. Solving this issue, then, clears away a big obstacle before the improvement of Iranian-American relations. However, is it in the interests of the Arab struggle against Zionism that such an obstacle be cleared away? In fact the parties who claim that Iran has a role in the Arab-Zionist conflict beneficial to the Arabs have based this assumption on various factors among which was the Iranian-American engagement.

Was the Algerian regime's attitude towards the hostages issue, therefore, compatible with the declared policy of the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front that calls for mobilising all resources and policies in the Arab homeland and the entire region against American imperialism, the sponsor of the Camp David Accords and the protector of the Zionist entity?

Now, to return to the main question, could the Iraq-Iran conflict weaken Iraq and, in consequence, badly affect its role in the struggle against the Zionist entity?

As we said previously, Iraq can have no effective role in this struggle without being, among the other things previously mentioned, stable and strong.

The Iranian regime's policy towards Iraq was not confined to usurping its land and water, and usurping the three Arab islands in the Arab Gulf. The Iranian regime has been working on overthrowing the nationalist and revolutionary system in Iraq and subjecting it to the Khomeini model. The only logical result of the success of Khomeini's scheme will be to deprive Iraq of stability and power, the two factors essentially needed for taking an effective role in the Arab-Zionist struggle.

This scheme has already brought Iran to an overwhelming state of instability and decline, yet once it is exported to Iraq it will undoubtedly produce even worse results.

When Iraq fights Iran in defence of its national rights and those

of the Arab nation it, in fact, defends its stability and its strength. No matter what relative losses it may suffer in men, weapons and funds, Iraq will achieve more stability and power by fighting Khomeini's regime and achieving victory over it than by surrendering to its scheme of exporting the so-called revolution to Iraq.

Logically this cannot be a loss but rather a relative gain for Iraq's role in the Arab-Zionist conflict. The great loss, as it were, would be in the success of Khomeini's designs on Iraq and the entire region and not in effectively encountering them even with military means.

On the other hand, it is a great mistake to confine the assessment of the military battle between Iraq and Iran to its resulting relative losses.

The results of such a great operation cannot be calculated in terms of figures only. This forms only one aspect of the battle. To clarify this point we have to go back to the previous (Arab) military encounters with the Zionist enemy.

In 1967, Egypt, Syria and Jordan engaged in a military battle with the Zionist entity after spending years in building up their individual military power. But they were defeated in a battle of no more than six days.

Many reasons for this defeat have been suggested. But we can establish here some of the commonly accepted reasons, apart from political and ideological aspects. They are as follows:

1. The inability to take the initiative in war.
2. The lack of efficient training and the inability to use modern arms in the face of modern Zionist arms.
3. The shortage of military supplies and of certain weapons.
4. The serious lack of administrative means and their various complex aspects in the war.
5. The almost total reliance in the war on international alliances.

However, in the war of 1973 the situation was somewhat better than in 1967. The Arab forces, among other factors, possessed the capability of taking the initiative in the war, and used their arms in a relatively better way than in 1967.

But despite the moral, political and military significance of the 1973 battle, it did not result in a military victory. On the Egyptian front Zionist penetration took place, i.e. the Deversoir penetration, and the Egyptian forces failed to maintain their advance in Sinai.

The Syrian front suffered from acute shortages and detrimental

mistakes. The Syrian and Egyptian forces failed to continue fighting for more than two weeks. Both countries resorted afterwards to a ceasefire and talks without any prior position of predominance over the Zionist enemy.

But if the Arab nation is to engage today or tomorrow in another military battle against the Zionist enemy, how shall the situation be then?

At present, Egypt has completely left the battle. Even if we assumed its return to the field of military confrontation against the Zionist enemy, its armed forces would be in need of many years of reconstruction. This is quite necessary after the great damage caused to its fighting potential by the Sadat regime. The Egyptian forces have lagged behind in the field of modern armaments in comparison with Iraq and some other Arab countries in the last seven years. This was the outcome of Sadat's measures in severing the Egyptian army's traditional source of armament without earnestly offsetting the shortage with quantitatively and qualitatively similar weapons, from his American allies.

This, in fact, means that the Iraqi army will shoulder the biggest task in the next confrontation with the Zionist enemy beside the Syrian and Jordanian armies, the Palestinian resistance forces and any other Arab forces able to take part in the battle.

It is absolutely unacceptable that the Arab nation should engage in another military battle and be defeated as was the case in 1967. Again it is absolutely unacceptable that the Arab nation emerge from such a battle without establishing a new and strong position in the balance of power, as happened in 1973. Either it fights a battle and achieves a significant result that changes the balance of power, or else it should avoid it.

How, therefore, could the role of the Iraqi army in a likely battle with the Zionist entity be viewed from the angle of the Iraq-Iran war?

Iraq was forced to go to war with Iran. In fact it did not want it. But when the war became a *de facto* reality, a good historical chance was provided for the Iraqi army to develop its combat potential and to extensively gain the needed expertise in modern wars and in fighting against the American arms with which the Zionist army is equipped. From the military point of view, this chance is unquestionably of great historical value.

Though it is beyond my specialisation to dwell at length on this aspect — something which military specialists and

researchers might do now and in the future — I may refer to the prominent results which are likely to ensue from the battle:

1. The Iraqi army will for the first time acquire the experience of leading and directing a total war with all land, sea and air forces. In the past it had no such chance, despite its various effective contributions to the Arab-Zionist conflict.

Previously Iraq had always been a partner in wars with the Zionist enemy that were directed and led by other Arab countries. Hence, the Iraqi army's lack of such experience in directing a total war.

But now, after four months of the fighting, the Iraqi army has gained better experience in this respect than all other armies in this area. The experience of four months' fighting is much greater than that of six days' fighting which ended with defeat in 1967 or of a battle lasting two weeks and a few days in 1973.

2. It will acquire specific and comprehensive experience in trying out its own arms and the effectiveness of those of the enemy which, as we mentioned previously, are exactly the same as those of the Zionist entity. It will also explore the extent of its needs for certain arms, something which cannot be done at the stage of training and preparation.

3. It will acquire the needed experience in repairing and manufacturing arms, ammunition and spare parts. All this will add up to developing its potential, its technical expertise, and the economical use of arms and ammunition.

4. It will obtain the necessary precise and comprehensive experience in securing the administration aspects of the war. This rather important point was one of the essential aspects of the wars of 1967 and 1973. To the Iraqi Army, which is hundreds of kilometres away from the battle-zones with the Zionist enemy, this point is of prime importance.

5. It will acquire the necessary precise and comprehensive experience in dealing with the world arms markets; and in securing the military requirements before and during the war.

6. It will also gain the practical experience of engaging in a large-scale war without the immediate and direct support of big powers. This of course has a great political as well as military importance. Undoubtedly the battle with the Zionist enemy involves political conditions and alliances which are different from the battle with Iran. However, the Arab armies have to be fully trained in preparation for a long military battle with the Zionist enemy without any reliance on immediate and direct external support. Such support might or might not be offered. If

it is offered no one can ensure the compatibility of its circumstances, quantity and quality with the actual and immediate needs of the battle.

Acquiring experience in this field will not only greatly enhance Arab political independence but also independent Arab military power.

After gaining such experience the Iraqi Army will not emerge from the battle with Iran in a weaker position so as to cause concern for its role in the Arab-Zionist conflict. The Iraqi Army is not fighting Iran at a time when a battle with Israel is being waged. It has engaged in the war with Iran after seven years of no fighting with Israel.

This battle, then, provides the Iraqi Army with the combat experience and qualitative progress needed for the next battle against the Zionist enemy.

It has acquired two essential elements in this war, namely victory and experience. With both, the Iraqi Army will be much more powerful than it used to be before the war, and it will be more capable of performing its necessary role in the Arab-Zionist conflict.

Iraq can obviously offset any numerical losses in the battle. Iraq and the Arab nation can offset any losses in men despite their high value. They will also be able to offset any losses in arms and equipment. This is very easy. In fact the results of the war should provide better conditions and experience for Iraqi and Arab armaments.

Chapter 6

The Steadfastness and Confrontation Front

Though this series is not on the so-called Steadfastness and Confrontation Front, it seems quite irrelevant to discuss the Iraq-Iran conflict without referring to the attitudes of the members of this Front towards the conflict. Some members have taken clear-cut attitudes based on the policy of this Front towards the Arab-Zionist conflict and other major Arab issues.

However, to understand the real reasons of the attitudes of these parties towards the Iran-Iran conflict it seems rather necessary to explain the main and actual attitudes of the same parties towards the key issues relating to the Arab-Zionist conflict and other major Arab issues.

The members of this Front claim not only that they have been engaging in the Arab-Zionist conflict but also that they have taken the lead in it. Yet he who opts to take such a stand should have the minimum of the following conditions:

1. A firm and clear political position towards the Arab-Zionist conflict and the Arab and friendly forces, whether they have a direct or indirect relation to this conflict.
2. The setting up of a military power in accordance with the human and economic resources of each state.
3. The employment of economic resources in the country concerned, to the advantage of the confrontation against the Zionist enemy.
4. A sound relationship between the ruler and his people with a view to seriously mobilising them and enhancing their capability to meet whatever sacrifices are needed in the battle with the Zionist enemy.

On this basis we shall discuss the position and policies of certain members of the Front vis-à-vis the Arab-Zionist conflict.

Let us first take the Syrian regime. We are not going to discuss its work in building up its army because this is quite natural. Neither are we going to refer to its attitudes towards international parties. What we shall deal with here is a major factor without which the proper political and military conditions for encountering the Zionist enemy could not be provided, regardless of the availability or the absence of all other attitudes and conditions.

Unquestionably Syria alone cannot successfully fight the Zionist enemy in a military battle. Neither can it do so in a battle that could generate more weight to the Arabs within the present balance of conflict.

The only way leading to these results would be in reaching an effective understanding and co-ordination among four parties, namely Iraq, Syria, Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organisation, in the political and military fields. This would further be facilitated by the existence of proper circumstances in Lebanon and the provision of a general Arab supporting position in the political, economic and military fields.

Without such a formula the Syrian regime will not be able to seriously encounter the Zionist enemy whatever Arab or international relations and alliances it makes.

But has the Syrian regime during the last few years been oriented towards this objective? This regime adopts a hostile attitude towards Iraq, which is the major power in the confrontation with the Zionist enemy, not only in the military field but also in other domains. Moreover it is totally biased to Iran in the war with Iraq.

The Syrian regime is also involved in a sharp conflict with Jordan which has the longest confrontation frontier with the Zionist enemy. Without the provision of an effective political position on the Jordanian front no successful military battle seems possible against the Zionist enemy. The Syrian regime has even deployed its forces against Jordan's borders, threatening it with invasion.

As for Syrian relations with the Palestine Liberation Organisation, the lack of confidence is obvious to everybody. There might be statements testifying to a rather good relationship between the two parties. But the nature of these false statements and why they are being made is also obvious.

Without dwelling on the role of the Syrian regime in Lebanon, whatever it may be, we can easily realise the fact that Lebanon is more on a downward course now than four years ago. At that

time the Syrian regime stepped into this Arab country under the pretext of protecting it from disintegration and falling to Zionist designs. But the fragmentation plan has been going on.

If the Syrian regime is not to be accused of having a desire for the continuity of such a state of decline in Lebanon or of even being one of its basic factors, it has at least failed effectively to check this decline.

Instead of being concerned to establish a sound relationship with Iraq, Syrian President Hafez Assad has turned to Libya to establish a unity that is not so much a fact as an illusion. Besides, the Syrian regime has chosen for itself a political Arab alliance called the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front with only one of the previously mentioned major parties of the next battle, namely the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

It might be argued that the Syrian regime, after unsuccessful attempts to forge alliances with Jordan and Iraq, had no other choice but the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front.

This claim might or might not be true. But it is not our concern to discuss this now.

However, there are rational and reasonable criteria with which to weigh things. Syria is an Arab country whose territory is occupied by the Zionist entity. Before shouldering its Arab nationalist duties it faces a Syrian national responsibility — that is to liberate the occupied Syrian territory. Syria is thus in need of an alliance with Iraq and with Jordan even if the governments of both countries were “bad”, as described by the Syrian information media.

Syrian national responsibility calls for the most meticulous efforts, for the highest responsible attitude and for the maximum flexibility in order to win these two countries to its side.

But has Syria done this? Could President Hafez Assad be as patient in sustaining a good relationship with Iraq and Jordan as he has been with Libya’s President Mu’amar Qaddafi?

Could Syria’s bias to Iran against Iraq and its deployment of forces on Jordan’s borders, regardless of any justification, serve the strategic objective of winning both countries to its side in the conflict with the Zionist enemy to liberate the Syrian Golan Heights before even liberating Palestine? We refer these questions to the honest and true sons of the Arab nation.

Let us turn now to the position of another member of this Front, Libya. Though there is a good deal to be said about the Libyan regime and its leader Mu’amar Qaddafi, we have to focus here principally on the assessment of its position towards the

basic requirements that have to be available to countries claiming to lead the confrontation with the Zionist enemy.

Libya is an Arab country of a rather vast area and a small population of no more than two million. Nevertheless it has a financial potential that far exceeds its size and its needs.

Every ruler can claim any role he likes but this will not change the facts.

What could Libya, then, do in the interests of the Arab-Zionist struggle?

The size of Libya, first of all, has no effect on the course of the Arab-Zionist conflict if it is not to be used as a strategic depth for Egypt. Yet Egypt's vast area reduces its need for this depth. This is quite different, for example, from the Syrian-Iraqi relationship.

The size of Libya's population and its cultural, educational and technical position will prevent it from setting up a military force that has any effective influence on the military confrontation with the Zionist enemy. In fact this is impossible, whatever efforts may be made by Libya.

This reference may not please Mr Mu'amar Qaddafi, who claims that he is now training the Libyan people and turning the whole of Libya into a military camp. This may or may not be a sincere and serious attempt on his part. But again, this will never change the reality of the situation.

Whatever good intentions, seriousness and great capability may supposedly be available to it, Libya will not be able to set up more than a small army if it were to have any effective role in the struggle against the Zionist enemy.

The mobilisation of thousands of Libyans to military camps will only be useful as a show-business gesture or as a means of facing certain internal dangers or indeed external ones such as the battle in Chad. Yet it is quite ineffective in facing such a strong and new military build-up as that of the Zionist entity.

Libya, however, possesses huge financial resources. This is indeed the only element that could be utilised for the battle either through direct means or through a political channel. The first means lies in the direct financial support of Syria, Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organisation. The political way lies in using Libyan oil as a political weapon against the Zionist enemy and its allies.

But Mr Qaddafi does not use the wealth of Libya, which is the only serious element at its disposal, in the way we have just referred to. Instead, he keeps boasting of things that will do

nothing for the battle, such as setting up an imaginary army, the purchase of huge quantities of arms, and writing books.

Indeed he does not financially support Syria and the Palestine Liberation Organisation, his partners in the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front.

He has not even paid Libya's share of the fund decided upon by the Baghdad Arab Summit to Syria, the Palestine Liberation Organisation and Jordan.

Politically the oil of Libya is still under the domination of American oil companies, which own 49 per cent of the total shares. In fact these companies still entirely run the technical operations and marketing of Libyan oil. Moreover they are still buying a large quantity of it.

This is the position of the Libyan regime. Yet it has kept on making daily demands and threats of liquidating American imperialist interests in the area. Official statements and all the speeches of Mr Mu'amar Qaddafi have always been full of such references.

These naturally would tend to give a false impression that these interests are no longer in Libya, while they are indeed second only to American interests in Saudi Arabia.

On 1 September 1980, Mr Mu'amar Qaddafi said in a speech that he is ashamed of the present situation in the Arab nation, and that this nation is no good as long as it succumbs to Zionist occupation.

After such a fair notion, Mr Qaddafi announced that he had taken a vitally important decision. It is to set up a merger with Syria in order to establish the basis of confrontation with the Zionist enemy or else he would join the Palestinian guerrillas (Feda'yeen) in Galilee.

Now we are in February 1981, after five months of this fine talk by Qaddafi. He certainly did not go to Galilee, nor did he achieve a merger with Syria within one month as indeed he and Mr Assad of Syria announced at their meeting in September 1980. Nevertheless we shall not say that he will never conclude such a step at all. Meanwhile what he seems to have achieved is the announcement of a merger with Chad.

One of the political contributions that are expected from the Libyan regime to the political side of the battle with the Zionist enemy is the consolidation of the African and pro-Arab front. The overriding majority of African states uphold the Palestine cause. Many of them severed relations with the Zionist enemy. Hence, the Arab nationalist responsibility is to consolidate such

an attitude through the development of relations with African countries and the extension of aid to them.

Such efforts are vitally needed so that these countries will feel that the Arabs appreciate their friendly stand and gratefully act in response to it.

But does Mr Qaddafi act in accordance with this need? And will not his policies in Africa keep African states away from the Arab nation and complicate their relations with it?

Honest and true Arabs, therefore, need no more elaboration to assess the role of Qaddafi's regime, a member of the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front, in the battle with the Zionist enemy.

Let us turn to another member-state of this Front, Algeria. It is a large-sized Arab country with a population of more than 17 million, which exceeds the population of Syria and that of Iraq. It is also an oil- and gas-producing country.

The area of Algeria is exactly similar to Libya's in that it is quite ineffective as a strategic depth in the battle with the Zionist enemy. But Algeria, given its large population, economic resources, and its combat experience derived from a seven-year liberation war, is fully capable of establishing one of the most powerful and modern Arab armies that have a great and effective weight in the military battle with the Zionist enemy.

It might be forced by its geographic remoteness from the battle fronts to focus on certain aspects of military power. Such mobile units like air force and some other types could be more quickly transferred to the front lines than the infantry and armoured forces. But even the other forces, in fact, can be transferred to the battlefield if there is any long-range preparation and planning in co-ordination with the confrontation states, especially since Algeria is connected with one of these states, Syria, within the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front, whose charter calls for military co-ordination.

But has Algeria adopted any of the elements of such a policy? Has it, for instance, built an army corresponding to the size of its population, its economic resources and its military experience derived from its liberation war?

The real size of the Algerian Army is perhaps not known to many people. It is in fact smaller than the Jordanian army which was established by a state with no economic resources and with a population of no more than three million.

Our suppositions on the possible participation of Algerian military power in the battle with the Zionist enemy might be

contested by certain people as too exaggerated and embarrassing. But they at least apply to the air force, because it is a mobile unit. So couldn't a state like Algeria be able to build a rather efficient air force and offer it to the Arabs as a contribution to the liberation battle of Palestine?

Moreover there is the sea. Algeria is a maritime country. But has it, so far, built a striking navy to be used in the battle with the Zionist enemy not only in blocking any naval aid coming to it through the Mediterranean, but also in using the Syrian or Libyan ports — if we exclude the Egyptian ones — to attack the Zionist navy and ports?

Furthermore Algeria, like Libya, the other member-state of the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front, does not offer financial aid to the confrontation states and parties. Even if we exclude Jordan, the other two parties, Syria and the Palestine Liberation Organisation, both members of the same Front, have not received any Algerian aid.

In the 1967 war between the Arabs and the Zionist enemy Mr Qaddafi had not yet appeared, and Algeria did not take part.

It might be argued that what happened in 1967 was a surprise Zionist attack. But in 1973 the Arabs started the attack. Algeria's relations with Egypt and Syria were not then so bad as indeed Syrian-Iraqi relations were. But Algeria did not participate in the battle either with its air force or land forces or even with volunteers. Similarly, Libya, Egypt's neighbour and partner in the tripartite union, did not take part.

However, an Arab country which was not a "Steadfastness" and "Confrontation" member, and was further from the battle-fronts than Libya and Algeria, contributed to the fighting. It was Morocco which sent fighters to the Syrian front at the Golan. It took part with the blood of its citizens that was spilled at the battlefield.

So is it impossible for remote Arabs to take part in the fighting? The modest Moroccan contribution proved it possible.

The position of the members of the "Steadfastness" and "Confrontation" Front towards the major issues of Steadfastness and Confrontation will no doubt cast light on their attitudes towards the Iraq-Iran conflict.

It will also cast light on the pretexts used by these parties for their attitudes, namely that they were concerned for Iraq's role in the Arab-Zionist conflict and for Iran's role hitherto.

But do these policies show any concern for their own roles in the Arab-Zionist conflict, let alone for the role of Iraq and for the

alleged role of Iran?

He who lacks something cannot offer it to others.

Chapter 7

Iran's role in the Arab-Zionist conflict during the rule of the Shah and that of Khomeini

Many things are now being said about Iran's role in the Arab-Zionist conflict whether under the Shah or under Khomeini.

The comparison between the role of Iran under the Shah and its role under Khomeini towards the Arab-Zionist conflict has always been used by certain Arab parties as a pretext for their attitudes towards the current conflict between Iraq and Iran and especially for the siding of some of them with Iran.

Many claims and exaggerations are being made on this point without, as yet, any precise and objective consideration of this role under the two regimes.

Let us first discuss this role under the Shah. The Shah's regime was friendly to the Zionist entity, with diplomatic, commercial and security relations.

Yet the Shah's regime retained, at the same time, good relations with many Arab regimes, including some members of the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front, namely Algeria and Syria as we have previously pointed out.

The policy of the Iranian government, then, towards the Arab-Zionist conflict lay in accepting the relevant international resolutions adopted by the United Nations.

The Shah's regime recognised the Zionist entity in its pre-June 1967 aggression borders. It did not recognise the new borders of occupation afterwards. When President Sadat of Egypt visited Jerusalem the Shah supported this step.

These attitudes certainly constituted a bad policy on the part of the Shah's regime, especially since they were adopted by an Islamic country. They were, in fact, in the interests of the Zionist entity in its conflict against the Arab Nation.

However, this policy was no different in its scope from that of many countries in the world with which the Arabs — including those of the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front — have dealings.

But the most serious effect that the policies of the Shah's regime had on the balance of political and military power

between the Arabs and the Zionist entity did not primarily lie in these stands. In fact it underlied the following attitudes:

1. Diverting Iraq, the major power with regard to military and human resources in the eastern part of the Arab homeland, from the confrontation with the Zionist enemy. This process was also aimed at destroying this power if this were possible, or weakening and forcing it out of the conflict's balance.

2. Posing a serious and permanent Iranian threat to the situation in the Arab Peninsula and the Arab Gulf. This would consequently provide an important and immediate motivation for the whole region to come under the American umbrella. Such a development would ultimately help stop the orientation by many states in this region towards using their financial resources to affect the existing balance of conflict between the Arabs and the Zionist entity.

In these attitudes the Shah of Iran was not only helping the Zionist entity and carrying out its designs but he was also a partner serving his own interests and territorial and expansionist ambitions.

That was the most serious part taken by the Shah in the Arab-Zionist conflict.

After the fall of the Shah some friends of the new regime said that this had tipped the balance in the area in favour of the Arabs. But was the balance really reversed?

If we consider the most serious factor affecting the balance of the Arab-Zionist conflict to be the Shah's objectives of engaging Iraq or destroying its power, or at least weakening it, and of the retention of the entire region of the Arab Peninsula and Gulf under the American umbrella, then these objectives have remained unchangeable under the new regime of Khomeini.

Without going into the reasons, motives and the conflicting information on who started the Iraq-Iran conflict, we have to deal with actual results.

The present situation indicates that, within two years of Khomeini's assumption of power, the two main elements in Iran's policy that most harmed the Arab nation in the balance of conflict with the Zionist entity have so far been achieved in a more serious way under Khomeini than under the Shah.

The Shah sought to preoccupy Iraq and weaken its power in the period 1969-1975. But he ceased his attempts in 1975 after he had failed to achieve any tangible result. Hence, the growth of Iraqi military and economic power between 1975 and 1980.

However, under Khomeini's regime, Iran has not only pre-occupied Iraq but also waged war against it.

At present, the Shah-built army engages in a large-scale war with all arms and along a front of hundreds of kilometres against the Iraqi army, which has become the major Arab military power after Egypt's withdrawal from the field of confrontation with the Zionist entity.

It was indeed after Khomeini's assumption of power that the atmosphere of tension and fear in the Arab Gulf region intensified. The independent trend in this region had then just modestly started. This was best demonstrated in the stands adopted by the countries of the Gulf in the Baghdad Arab Summit (1978) with regard to the Camp David accords (between the Egyptian regime and the Zionist entity). These stands implied a clear readiness to reject American designs and to follow the general lines of Arab nationalist policy.

As a result of the policies of Khomeini's regime in "exporting the revolution" and in its war against Iraq the foreign fleets came to the region. The United States got new military facilities. Some of the countries of the region started in one way or another to look for protection under the American umbrella.

Therefore the role played invariably by the Shah in affecting the balance of power between the Arabs and the Zionist entity has now been more seriously and firmly realised under Khomeini.

Since this is the objective reality, on what grounds do certain people consider the Iranian revolution to have tipped the balance of power in favour of the Arabs, in their conflict with the Zionist entity?

Were these assessments based on Khomeini's measures in severing Iran's relations with the Zionist entity, in opening an office for the Palestine Liberation Organisation and calling it an Embassy, and in launching press campaigns against Zionism and imperialism?

Certain people have been pinning great hopes on Iran's supposed readiness to commit itself to the conflict with the Zionist entity. Some of these have even voiced their wishful thinking and exaggerations in this regard.

This readiness might or might not be true. Yet we have to deal with the actual reality and not with mere claims and statements.

What Iran did after the revolution with regard to the Zionist entity only brought it up to a level similar to that of Pakistan, for example. Iran severed diplomatic relations with the Zionist

entity. It was a good step. But essentially it was only a correction of a devious stand previously adopted by the Shah's regime.

Pakistan has originally never recognised this entity, though it was allied to friends of Israel especially the United States within the Central Organisation alliance (Cento).

The same attitude has been adopted by Afghanistan, Bangladesh when it came into being, Indonesia and others. Even certain non-Islamic countries such as Spain and Greece have so far never recognised the Zionist entity though they are part of the Western world and members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

Many African non-Islamic countries have severed relations with the Zionist entity as a gesture of solidarity with the Arabs. Iran, therefore, has no distinction whatsoever over non-Islamic countries with regard to this attitude. Rather, it has only risen to their position after the fall of the Shah.

As for the representation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation in Tehran, it makes no difference whether the Organisation's office there was called an Embassy or an office.

Since the Organisation has not yet established a government or a provisional government, it has not demanded that its offices in foreign countries be called embassies. Had it desired this, it would have demanded it from its Arab brothers, who would have certainly responded. It is, therefore, quite insignificant that its office in Tehran should be called an embassy by the Iranian authorities.

But does Iran extend financial or military aid to the Palestine Liberation Organisation? Available information does not indicate the existence of such aid. Yet even if it existed it would not make Iran different from many other countries.

Many foreign countries extend aid to the Palestine Liberation Organisation. This includes arms, military equipment, medical aid, cultural services and other facilities.

The financial needs of the Palestine Liberation Organisation were satisfactorily met at the Baghdad Arab Summit (1978). Those who have not yet paid their share in this aid as defined by the Summit were the Organisation's rich partners in the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front.

We wonder, therefore, what Iran has actually offered to the Palestinian cause. Did it send any Iranian forces to the front lines to fight beside the Arabs against the Zionist entity?

What is certainly established so far is that the Iranian forces are fighting the Iraqi army, which is the biggest Arab military

power in the Arab East.

Some people might say "it would have been possible", "probably" and "it was said" that Iran would have fought against the Zionist entity. But essential issues cannot be considered according to "it would have been possible", "probably" and "it was said". These could only be calculated by actual considerations.

Iran's policy, therefore, has not gone beyond the limits of solidarity and sympathy with the Arabs in their struggle against the Zionist entity. Such a stand, in fact, is being adopted by the majority of Muslim and non-aligned countries including those in Africa. It is even adopted by certain European countries. Nevertheless Iran adopts another attitude which has a very bad effect on the balance of conflict between the Arab nation and the Zionist entity. It is exactly the same role played by the Shah or even more serious.

Appendix

To avoid confusing the issues

**A series of three articles by the same author,
published by the same paper on 25 April, 2 and 9 May
1980**

Since the very beginning of its modern rise, the Arab nation has been faced with various designs on its existence and character. These designs have posed a serious threat not only to parts of its territory and to its basic interests but also to its legitimate aspirations for freedom, unity and advancement.

For years now the Arab nation has been living in tension, experiencing sharp conflict within itself as well as with external powers.

Throughout this long and complex course, the Arab nation and its revolutionary and progressive movement has achieved certain victories. Meanwhile they have suffered bitter setbacks and serious defeats as well.

Much may be said about the present and past situation of the Arab nation as well as about its successes and failures and the lessons possibly derived.

However, in this modest attempt I will deal with a particular aspect which seems to be of prime importance with regard to the Arab nation's present conditions, playing an essential part in both setbacks suffered and victories achieved by the Arabs. It is the clarity of the situation as opposed to confusion and ambiguity specially in so far as the Arab nation's relationship with Iran in the present circumstances is concerned.

A faithful account of the Arab struggle over a long period abundant with tension and conflicts will undoubtedly reveal an essential fact. Once the scene of the battle is clear and contestants' trenches are clearly set apart, the Arab nation, even when it was relatively short of means, seemed to fight more effectively and achieve better results than when the issue is confused, even though the nation is materially better equipped.

Some might rightly argue that this is a general fact and the Arab nation is no exception. Unfortunately, many sons of this nation, including many leaders, seem to ignore this fact while the enemies largely use it in a rather malicious and clever way.

This ignorance has on many occasions led to further setbacks and losses at times when the Arab nation appeared to be strong and preparing for advance.

For comparison, let us take some examples from modern history: in the forties the Arab homeland was, for the most part, under direct colonial control. Only a few Arab countries were enjoying limited forms of independence because of treaties and foreign bases as well as the spread of colonial influence over various political, economic, administrative and cultural domains. These countries were poverty-stricken, backward and weak in various fields of diplomacy and information.

At that time, the Zionist scheme of establishing a state in Palestine was implemented. Despite all their weaknesses and shortcomings, the Arab governments were compelled to fight back, thus forcing the Zionists — albeit enjoying the full backing of colonialist powers and a certain degree of the Soviet Union's support — to restrict their usurpation to a limited part of Palestine on which they established their entity. The Arab nation faced the occupation with a total rejection and have since maintained both this attitude and the hope to restore the usurped homeland.

After more than thirty years all the Arab countries achieved independence and set up armies, information and diplomatic bodies that are much more substantial than those of the forties. Some of them have even got huge budgets. Yet with such a relatively strong Arab position many Arab parties tend to accept the Zionist usurpation of the pre-June 1967 occupied territory. These parties, in fact, would not hesitate to deal in one way or another with the Zionist entity. Moreover the head of the biggest Arab country has gone as far as to recognise this entity and make alliances with it and with imperialists against the Arab nation.

Obviously, there are a host of political, economic and cultural reasons on all local, Arab and international levels about which much can be said. However, we have to remember that Sadat, who committed this act, was the same one who broadcast the first communiqué of the 23 July Revolution of 1952 in Egypt and who had been the deputy of the nationalist leader Abdul Nasser until his death (in 1970). He was also the head of Egypt when it fought the war of October 1973.

In the aftermath of the war only a few revolutionary and nationalist Arabs warned against Sadat's devious policy, whereas the majority considered him a leader true to his country, even though some of them disagreed with him on certain details or

tactics. In fact many Arab political circles even maintained their alliances with him up to the day before his ill-omened visit to Jerusalem.

How could Sadat, therefore, move from a position of “national leader” and of “October war hero”, as viewed by even some of his later critics, to that of openly and flagrantly recognising the Zionist entity and betraying the Arab cause, while the political leaders of the forties and fifties, despite all their reactionary policies and foreign connections, could not commit even a minor part of what Sadat has done?

The underlying reason, I think, is that in the forties and fifties the scene of battle between the Arabs and the Zionist entity had not been confused, its trenches had not been confused. Hence the hesitation of even those rulers openly connected with western colonialism to do what Sadat has done a few decades later.

Had Sadat declared his intention to go to Jerusalem and directly co-operate with the Zionist enemy a year after coming to office, he would undoubtedly have been executed or killed by the masses in a great uprising. Equally, had he declared it immediately after the October 1973 War he would have also been faced with strong resistance. But it was in 1977 that he carried out his conspiracy.

In fact Sadat led a malicious and gradual process of confusing the whole issue. He confused the military action which might bear some aspects of a liberation war with political flexibility that leads to a gradual loss of the national cause and interests.

At an earlier stage, Sadat confused the issues of democracy, and the need to correct certain mistakes made by the Nasserite progressive experiment, with those of reactionary apostasy and of destroying this experiment.

He also confused an independent attitude in dealing with the Soviet Union with actual alignment with the United States.

It seems that Sadat confused various issues to such a degree that any one of them, if viewed separately by a short-sighted observer, would seem legitimate and necessary.

To create such confusion would eventually leave the masses at a loss. This would obviously facilitate the gradual carrying-out of the conspiracy, especially after he had wiped out, neutralised or isolated in a gradual process the forces that could resist.

Undoubtedly Sadat's success in this scheme has been due to his capability of alluding, confusing and fragmenting all opposed

forces on the Egyptian, Arab and international levels. At the same time he worked for the unity, consolidation and co-ordination of all Egyptian, Arab and international forces and individuals supporting him in his hidden intentions.

For this purpose, he even used individuals, parties, movements, leading circles and states, each discovering later that he was used for another purpose than he thought at the beginning.

From recent history let us take another example that this generation still remembers. In the fifties there were two conflicting fronts: the first, led by Nuri Said in Iraq, was reactionary, tied to western colonialism and calling for connections with western military pacts. The second, led by Nasser in Egypt, was nationalist, opposed to colonialist domination and to military bases, and calling for freedom and neutrality.

Sharp political disputes and hostile press campaigns took place between the two fronts, in which the reactionaries and pro-colonialists had undoubtedly the upper hand.

However, thanks to the clear setting of the battle and the separation of the opposing trenches, the Arab liberation movement advanced, consolidated its power, foiled attempts at extending the Baghdad Pact to the countries of the area, and achieved the historic objective of the unity between Syria and Egypt through the United Arab Republic. Furthermore, in 1958 a revolution took place in Iraq overthrowing Nuri Said's regime and the Baghdad Pact.

The Arab nationalists felt then that they had achieved a high degree of power in countering colonial powers and their local clients. Prospects of advancing to the objectives of liberty, progress and unity appeared bright to them. But let us see how matters developed.

At that time Arab nationalist forces had various views on the situation in the then United Arab Republic (UAR) especially on, among other things, how it was run and the question of democratic options. Nevertheless, to those faithful to Arab unity this Republic, as the biggest Arab power that ever existed in modern history, constituted at the very least a powerful barrier against Zionist aggression.

When a nationalist and anti-colonial revolution took place in Iraq in 1958, Arab nationalist forces immediately called for the unity of Iraq and the UAR. But Qassim (then head of the Iraqi Government), together with the Iraqi Communists, reactionaries

and all the forces hostile to Arabism and Arab unity, raised the question of democracy.

To Arab struggle, democracy is unquestionably necessary and legitimate. But the members of this alliance set democracy against nationalism, unity and the United Arab Republic. Helped by many Arab and international parties, they launched a fierce campaign against the Republic, Nasser, Arab nationalism and the nationalists of Iraq, especially the Ba'th Party.

An intricate case of confusion and ambiguity had been thus created, leaving the true Arab at a complete loss, wavering between his feeling for the importance of unity and his desire for democracy. He was also lost in a vicious circle of conflicts in which no party would fully appear in the right.

This process, in consequence, led to the collapse of the unity proposal between Iraq and the then United Arab Republic and to a severe state of suppression against the nationalist forces in Iraq, especially the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party. Then the issue of democracy was turned down.

As a result, Iraq was subjected to an oppressive dictatorial regime while in the United Arab Republic secessionists, taking advantage of the hostile attitude of the Qassim regime and the Iraqi Communists towards this Republic, succeeded in carrying out the conspiracy of secession (in Syria, 1961).

After three years of the Revolution of 14 July 1958 in Iraq the Arab revolutionary movement was supposed to be preparing for a further advance in spreading its influence. Instead, the Arab nation, however, was faced with the loss of Egyptian-Syrian unity and the loss of democracy in Iraq as well. All this was obviously in the interests of the colonialists and Zionists alone.

We have to remember this issue while we deal with the present situation, in which basic facts are not different from those of the past, despite the change in individuals and in certain superficial aspects.

The above two examples may help us to find the right approach and distinguish between the useful and harmful aspects of the multitude of confused and contradictory attitudes.

What, therefore, are the dangers which in present circumstances threaten the Arab nation? And how can we explain, within these circumstances, the attitude of Iranian leading circles towards the Arab causes and in particular against Iraq and its nationalist and revolutionary leadership? Many questions, heated discussions and a deliberate and complex process of confusion are all centred now on these issues.

The true Arab nationalist forces, nevertheless, can still distinguish between right and wrong and find the sound approach, once they return to their original fountains and remember their former bitter experiments together with the lessons derived from them.

Many problems and sharp political and social contradictions still exist in the Arab homeland. In fact there are still contradictory class conditions, large-scale corruption, especially in certain regimes, and various forms of foreign influence and backwardness in many fields.

In this situation, political and ideological parties hold different views on the methods of tackling these problems. Yet there is perhaps a general consensus that the greatest dangers to the Arab nation are at present posed by the existence of the Zionist entity and foreign influence; the threat of both is permanent and steadily escalating. Added to this danger also is the gross betrayal of the Arab cause by Sadat's regime with all its serious effects on the balance of conflict between the Arab nation and its Zionist enemy.

All are agreed also on countering these threats with a unanimous Arab policy.

What, therefore, are the circumstances and attitudes that are likely to weaken this policy and what are those which are likely to strengthen it?

After Sadat signed the Camp David accords a serious situation developed in the Arab region. Large-scale confusion, despair and apprehension at the prospects of a possible extension of this scheme to other Arab countries arose in the area. Certain parties even called for subjecting their countries to foreign powers' strategies to supposedly counter the schemes of America, Israel and Sadat's regime.

The result of all this was so negative that had it continued for a longer period it would have helped escalate the danger resulting from Sadat's sell-out and from the set-up of the alliance of America, Israel and Sadat's regime.

At that time, Iraq under its nationalist leadership took a step that was considered even by its critics as historic and nationalist.

Unaccustomed, though, to the formulae of Arab Summits, Iraq took the initiative of holding the Baghdad Summit (in 1978). After a complex political battle Iraq led the Conference unanimously to an Arab nationalist position considered to be the minimum limit. It was open, however, to any advanced position and to any further development to be taken collectively or indi-

vidually by Arab Governments.

Furthermore, when Sadat signed the so-called "peace" agreements with the Zionist entity on 26 March 1979, Iraq, which hosted a Conference of Arab Foreign and Economic Ministers, made it possible for the conferees, after a complex and difficult political battle, to reach certain resolutions which were even more advanced than the Summit's resolutions a few months earlier.

Thus a proper Arab position for countering Sadat's sell-out was created. Though it might not satisfy the aspirations of Arab revolutionary nationalists for a "maximum limit" programme, this position is relatively in advance of any other one that would have arisen had it not been for the Baghdad Summit and its results. It could indeed be further consolidated through developing, even though slowly, its positive elements.

The greatest achievement of the Baghdad Summit was to dispel the confusion and doubts created by Sadat in his downward course of betrayal. It was indeed after this Summit that two different and separate policies were clearly set before the Egyptian and Arab masses, as well as before public opinion in the Islamic and Third World countries.

This clear situation helped the Arab nation to isolate Sadat on the Arab, Islamic and non-aligned levels. A few months of diplomatic and political effort did not only help achieve this isolation but also largely weakened Sadat's position in Africa and blocked a possible Western European attitude favourable to him. In fact, the European attitudes have increasingly come closer to the Baghdad Summit lines.

All this has been largely reflected on the course of the Camp David accords, making it more complex and difficult. It was also reflected on Sadat's position in Egypt. His regime has lost most of its misleading influence on the Egyptian people. Its political, economic and security crises have been more exacerbated. These results are indeed of great importance with regard to the Arab-Zionist conflict.

Obviously they could not settle this conflict by some miracle because such an issue cannot be treated this way. Yet they reshaped the whole situation, even though the advantages derived by the Arabs are still limited.

In such an atmosphere the Shah of Iran was overthrown and the new regime took over.

I shall not deal here with the assessment of this change and whether it was a revolution or a mere popular outburst. I shall

not argue about the identity of the "Revolution" and its past course either. What I shall dwell on is the relationship between the attitudes of the Iranian leading circles and the conditions of the Arab nation and its struggle against Zionism, Sadat's betrayal and imperialist plots.

If we look back to those events we shall see that the Iranian leading circles set out to launch hostile campaigns against Iraq since the very beginning of their take-over. This fact is of prime importance because certain people either delude others or are themselves under the delusion that the Iraq-Iran dispute has only flared up recently.

Certain excerpts from a relevant series of editorials published by *Al-Thawra* daily in Baghdad (12-14 June 1979) serve as an indicator of this fact.

Said *Al-Thawra*:

"Again Iraq-Iran relations were clouded. After four years and a few months of silence, the Iranian press and radio returned to attacking Iraq, its leadership and the Party that leads its Revolution.

"Why could all this happen while in Iran there is a revolution against the Shah who had taken an open and all-out hostile attitude in the period from 1969 to 1975, against Iraq, its leadership and the Party of its Revolution; and who had taken military, political and other measures to restrict the movement of Iraq and prevent it from fully utilising its great potential in the Arab nationalist struggle?

"This is a rather significant question which has to be clearly and frankly explained so as to dispel any doubts and to warn against possible consequences before any deterioration in the present situation.

"When, at an earlier stage, the Shah embarked on provocative measures against Iraq in all military, political and propaganda fields, we made it clear to him that a tense relationship between Iraq and Iran would in no way serve their own interests, neither does it serve those of the countries of the region. We also pointed out then that both countries had to seek a sound relationship and any formula bringing them together rather than separating them.

"However, the Shah, in his arrogance, thought he was powerful and capable of continuing the game. He even fell under a delusion of being able to change the political system in Iraq, hence his plan for the conspiracy of January 1970 which was swiftly crushed and whose treacherous and mercenary

collaborators were duly taken to task.

“He was overwhelmed by his ambition to dominate the whole region, and by old historical hatreds. He was also lured by big powers which were seeking to dominate the area through inspiring tension and feuds between its countries.

“Confident of success, the Shah started the game and steadily escalated his hostile measures against Iraq. This took the form of direct and indirect war. Religion was the prominent guise used by the Shah’s regime in its thrust against Iraq.

“The anti-Iraq propaganda campaign launched then by the Shah’s press and radio bear witness to this. Among other means used by the Shah against Iraq were particularly some individuals who were supposedly religious figures.

“This fact with all its irony has to be mentioned. The irony in fact lies in that the same game is being repeated even though the player is different.

“The Iranian ruler was at that time showing signs of fraternity and friendship to remote Arabs while at the same time embarking on a deliberate harmful attitude towards the nearer Arabs. The Shah established close relations of friendship and alliance with many Arab rulers. Meanwhile he was conspiring against Iraq, and sending his forces to occupy the three Arab islands in the Arab Gulf: the Greater and the Lesser Tumbs and Abu Musa. This fact has to be also mentioned, for history will almost be repeated in Iran if it has not already been repeated under even the same conditions.”

* * *

“When Iran’s Revolution took place Iraq welcomed its success and sent a note to the Iranian Government expressing its desire to establish good relations. The confirmation by Iraq of this attitude in an official note expressed Iraq’s desire to establish a sound and clear basis for its relations with Iran.

“However, Iraq’s attitude towards Iran and Iranian events is quite different from those adopted by other Arab countries. Apart from all that brings the Arabs and Iran together, Iraq and Iran are neighbours sharing a border of hundreds of kilometres and certain direct mutual interests. The co-operation between them, therefore, leads to direct positive results for both, while their disagreement will lead to direct negative results for both as well. This is why Iraq was keen to confirm its stand with regard to the Iranian Revolution in an open and clear note.

“However, from the early days after the success of this Revolution, the Iranian press has set out on a hostile campaign against Iraq.

“Among other justifications for this attitude we then explained it as a result of the confusion that was enveloping Iran and of the existence of various trends and groups. We also found another justification in the existence of suspect elements, let alone imperialists and their agents, who would exploit this confused situation for their own ends. Thus we patiently kept silent.

“But our silence did not stop the hostile campaign by Iran. Rather it was escalated by Iran’s rulers, who either interpreted our position as a sign of weakness or were misled into believing so.

“Through our Embassy in Tehran, we started officially to bring these anti-Iraq acts to the attention of the Iranian Foreign Ministry, asking it for explanations. But the responses were largely characterised by ambiguity, procrastination and unconvincing justification.

“Meanwhile what was really worthy of note was that most of the direct and indirect anti-Iraq offences were made by those who were generally regarded as of Khomeini’s group. Recently these offences reached a rather dirty level. Statements by Ahmed Madani (Iran’s navy commander and governor of the region of Arabistan at the time) and other Iranian officials bear witness to this. A systematic campaign against Iraq started on Iran’s radio as well.

“Why all this?

“If Iran’s revolution is independent and anti-imperialist the nearest country, not only geographically but also with regard to its independent policy, will doubtless be Iraq.

“It is a formidable bastion of anti-imperialist struggle in the whole region. This fact has naturally constituted a thorny obstacle to the imperialist plan. And Iraq is a country fully independent of all international camps. Thus it will only be natural that those who pursue common policies come together.

“If Iran’s Revolution is partly for Palestine, as has been said, the Arab country most necessary for Palestinian struggle at present is Iraq. It is the biggest among the Eastern Arab countries and the most fully equipped with human, military and economic resources. Without Iraq it would not be possible to bridge the strategic gap which has been created by Sadat’s sell-out, in the conflict of the Arab nation with the Zionist entity and with imperialism.

“Could, therefore, a sincere attitude towards Palestine be in line with preoccupying Iraq, which is desperately needed for Palestine? And if Iran’s Revolution was allied to the Arabs, the first it should be allied to should be the Arabs of Iraq, for they are neighbours and they are the nearest Arabs.

“It is quite illogical for the Iranian leaders to say that they are allies of the Arabs when they cordially deal with remote Arabs and launch campaigns of distortion and slander against the nearer ones. What could the remote Arabs get out of sweet words except words, while the nearer Arabs suffer direct harm?”

The above excerpts, reproduced as a reminder, were part of a responsible and wise reply by Iraq to the hostile campaign launched by Iran’s rulers. This was made in June 1979, when the Arab nation was undergoing the results of the Baghdad Summit and the need to develop them, a matter in which Iraq has an effective part. Existing in the meantime was the new drive in Iraqi-Syrian relations resulting from the Charter of Nationalist Action with all the implied nationalist hopes for solid steps towards unity and joint action against Sadat’s alliance with the Zionists.

It was in that particular period that the Iranian campaign against Iraq escalated, bringing to the Arab arena and the region at large a fresh attempt at confusing the issues and mixing up separate and opposing trenches.

Escalating again was the Iranian campaign in less than a year after the first, taking this time the form of not only a political and propaganda campaign but also of a deliberate distortion of Iraq’s internal situation. Iran’s rulers tended to impose a side-issue on Iraq through carrying out a systematic terrorist campaign against citizens and massive rallies. They had not even cared for using guises. Rather they openly used Persian terrorists and institutes in Iraq to carry out the murder assignments.

But when did all this happen? The timing here is a key factor in understanding the situation. The first campaign was launched by the rulers of Iran at a time Iraq was shouldering a prominent and effective duty in the Baghdad Summit, and later in the conference of Arab Economic and Foreign ministers, with the aim of securing a coherent Arab position against the Sadat regime’s alliance with the Zionists and imperialists as well as against the Camp David accords conspiracy.

During the second campaign, Iraq was carrying out three prominent tasks whose vital significance for the Arab cause, and in particular for the Arab struggle against Zionism and

imperialism, can clearly be seen by any true Arab nationalist. These are:

Firstly, the Sixth Non-Aligned Summit held in Havana in September (1979) witnessed a complex political battle in order to condemn the Camp David accords and isolate the Egyptian regime from the entire non-aligned movement. A fundamental role was played then by President Saddam Hussein in helping reach the results adopted by the Conference.

In fact Iraq mobilised for this end all its good relations with the non-aligned countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia. Regardless of all sensitive aspects of Arab relations, President Saddam Hussein carried out an extensive effort to reach a common Arab approach. He visited various heads of delegations and even by-passed protocol by receiving Foreign Ministers and by meeting some of them in corridors to discuss or clarify a particular point.

Obviously all this effort was to enable the Arab nation to achieve a step forward vitally needed in consolidating the Arab and international opposition to Sadat's sell-out and to the conspiracy of the Camp David accords.

In this conference, the very essence of non-alignment itself stood a very critical test. Growing so flabby and penetrated by big-power influence, the non-aligned movement had witnessed many attempts and trends to bring it closer to one big power or another. This in consequence would lead to strengthening the claims of the uselessness of this movement and later its collapse, a matter which would reopen the scope of polarisation by both big powers.

Against this background, President Saddam Hussein took a prominent role in asserting the independent, anti-imperialist and progressive essence of the movement. His meticulous efforts to sustain the unity of the movement at last succeeded in getting the conference to reach a good degree of coherence in this respect.

Iraq was chosen by the Conference to host the next Summit Conference in 1982. This expressed a clear acknowledgement of Iraq's sincere commitment to the Movement's principles, to its positive role in the Movement and to its preparedness to make sacrifices for its interests.

Second, throughout the political battle fought by President Saddam Hussein at the Havana Summit, he discovered a serious defect in Arab-African relations. Many African leaders who were often regarded as friends of the Arabs were found to have various

reservations about the way the Arab countries dealt with their own countries.

Hence they were not ready to support the same policy desired by the Arabs in the Summit with regard to opposing the Egyptian regime and the Camp David conspiracy.

This issue was seriously reviewed in Baghdad after President Hussein had returned from Havana. As a result, it was decided to launch an active campaign to establish close relations of friendship and co-operation with most African countries. This would be a demonstration of the Arab nation's desire not only to acquire their support but also to set up constructive relations with them and to extend the free aid they desperately need because of the losses they had suffered after adopting pro-Arab policies against the Zionists and their masters, the American imperialists.

Having no particular interests in Africa, Iraq had as a basic objective in this process serving the Arab interests in confronting the Zionist entity and imperialism.

During recent months, many meetings with African leaders were held in Baghdad, signalling a fresh political activity in the region and drawing the attention of many international powers.

Embarking on a serious process of building a strong army and carrying out an extensively ambitious development plan, Iraq has no surplus assets and riches to dispense with. Yet Iraq had cut part of its basically needed funds, to earnestly extend free aid to friendly African States. In so doing, Iraq has been aiming at positively contributing to the process of setting right Arab-African relations.

Iraq also intended to strengthen the African policy that was crystallised at the Havana Non-Aligned Summit against the Camp David accords and Sadat's approach.

The third though most important role was the Arab nationalist initiative of the eight-point National Declaration announced by President Saddam Hussein on 8 February 1980.

Why the declaration?

After the Tehran American Embassy hostages issue and that of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, a new situation has largely arisen in the area.

Without dwelling at length on these two issues, one may easily detect the gravest consequences of both. They have helped escalate tension in the region and between the two big powers as well. Emerging as a result of both events has been a fervent attempt by American imperialists to secure a military presence

in the region by seeking bases or so-called facilities under the pretext of using them against Iran or the Soviet Union.

Against this background President Saddam Hussein presented on 8 February 1980 his declaration, the National Declaration. It was aimed at foiling any attempt to turn the Arab homeland into an arena of world-power conflict, or to turn part of it into a basis for foreign forces conflicting on issues quite irrelevant to the Arab nation's interests. The Declaration was also an attempt to set Arab interrelations on a sound nationalist basis, together with setting the Arab nation's relations with neighbouring countries including Iran on a basis of good neighbourliness, co-operation and fraternity.

Within a short period, the Declaration was accorded the support of the majority of Arab countries. Many of them had, in fact, confirmed to Iraq their preparedness to adopt and strongly adhere to the Declaration as a national charter. Serious attempts were also made to hold an Arab Summit for such a purpose.

From 25-27 March 1980 an Arab popular conference was held in Baghdad, attended by many Arab political parties, organisations and personalities. The conferees discussed President Saddam Hussein's Declaration and finally agreed on its vital importance to the Arab nation in its battle against the Zionist entity and in meeting imminent threats.

Four days after the conclusion of the Arab popular conference the Iranian terrorist campaign against Iraq began. The Iranian rulers also escalated their political and propaganda assault and their military build-up against Iraq.

After freeing the hostages, the Iranian rulers, according to their own statements, concentrated on Iraq as their prime enemy.

In whose interest, then, has Iran adopted at this particular time such a policy against Iraq, which is assuming all these roles and shouldering all these responsibilities?

How can one explain the attitude of the Iranian Revolution which, while claiming independence from the influence of big powers, advocates a policy based on hatred and conspiracy against Iraq, whose leadership has been relentlessly stressing and cementing the independent approach, a matter well demonstrated by President Hussein's Declaration and the entire Iraqi policy?

How can one also explain the attitude of the Iranian Revolution which, while claiming to support the Arabs in their battle against the Zionist entity, carries out all these schemes that

would divert Iraq away from its effective role in this battle? How can one do this when Iraq had shouldered the main responsibility of the Baghdad Summit and its resolutions, besides other great responsibilities with all the efforts and sacrifices involved?

Any honest observer of Arab affairs will no doubt realise that the policy of the Iranian rulers towards Iraq is entirely oriented to inflicting harm and destruction not only on Iraq but also on the Arab nation and its struggle against the Zionist enemy, particularly after Sadat's betrayal and the implementation of the imperialist American plan.

We have to dwell upon an issue that might puzzle some people in considering the Iranian attitude. It is an essential question that will cast light on many other aspects. It is whether Iraq had started the conflict by harming Iran — which prompted Iranians to retaliate.

First, who started the previous well-known conflict between the Shah's Iran and Iraq, which lasted for several years?

In April 1969 while the Revolution in Iraq had been in its first year, the Shah of Iran unilaterally abrogated the 1937 treaty on borders and relations between the two countries.

As a reminder, and to dispel any possible confusion we have to refer to the pretext under which the Shah's regime took that step. It claimed then that by abrogating the treaty he was trying to correct a situation imposed on Iran during the British colonial domination of Iran. Pretty clearly, the Shah claimed that it had abrogated the treaty and now demanded a new definition of borders and relations after it had "got rid of" colonial domination.

From that time up to March 1975 the Shah imposed on revolutionary Iraq an aggressive battle, using all its propaganda, military and political resources. The Shah even sought to interfere in Iraq's affairs, hence the 1970 futile conspiracy against Iraq's revolutionary government masterminded by his intelligence.

Furthermore, he put his army intelligence and their military and financial resources at the disposal of Barzani to start an insurgency against the Revolution's government and instigate a civil war in Iraq. It is worthy of note here that religion, the sectarian card and false religious figures had long been used by the Shah's regime in its anti-Iraq propaganda efforts and in its intelligence activities inside Iraq.

Agreement with the Shah's regime in March 1975 on relations of co-existence and good neighbourliness only became possible

after six years of conflict through which the Shah eventually came to realise that the plan to dominate Iraq, or dismember it, or to overthrow its revolutionary and nationalist revolution, was doomed. He also found that conflict with Iraq was a double-edged scimitar.

Then the Shah left and the new rulers came into office. However, no true observer would fail to realise their real intentions. The realities of the situation serve to reveal these intentions. Would it be in the interests of Iraq to harm Iran after its Revolution in a way that prompted Iran's retaliation? Definitely not.

In Iraq there is a nationalist and socialist system based on the principles of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party. The Ba'th's objectives are not internationalist but Arab nationalist.

Iraq, therefore, has no particular interest, in so far as its principles are concerned, in whatever political or ideological choices are made by Iranians, provided that such choices do not lead to conflict between the two neighbours or to the instigation of hostile attitudes in Iran against Iraq and the Arab nation.

Led by a revolutionary and socialist system, Iraq obviously feels delighted at the assumption of power in any neighbouring country by a party closer in principles and orientation. This would no doubt provide better conditions for co-operation than those created otherwise by the existence of systems that are widely differing in their ideological, social and political structure and in their international relations and policies.

The nearest choice to the principles of the Ba'th Party and to the interests of Iraq, as an Arab country, seems to be for Islamic countries to assert their Islamic identity as a political, social and ideological choice. In so doing, Moslem countries will eventually come closer to the Arab nation. They will also join the Arabs' effort in their fight against Zionism.

One of the relevant examples was that of Turkey when it moved far away from the spirit of Islam and lost its Islamic identity under the pretext of secularisation and the adoption of Western civilisation. Turkey in consequence moved far away from the Arabs as well. Moreover it was used on several occasions, especially in the fifties, against the Arab nation and its progressive movement. It has even established relations with the Zionist entity, obviously to the disadvantage of the Arab nation.

The same happened with Iran under the Shah when he tried to estrange Iran from its Islamic identity. He had as a result moved to a position of an enemy to the Arab nation and an ally of its

enemies.

But let us look at the example of Pakistan. Even though it was a member of the Baghdad Pact and the Cento Pact afterwards, it was always close to the Arabs, supporting them in their causes and refusing to establish any relations with the Zionist entity.

The new regime in Iran came at a time when Iraq was shouldering the duties resulting from the Baghdad Summit and the Charter for National Action with Syria. Naturally Iraq was at the time desperately in need of stability on its eastern borders in order to carry out the responsibilities for which it had voluntarily opted.

It was also in great need of any new power which could possibly be added to those forces opposed to the alliance of Sadat's regime, the Zionists and imperialists.

What political or economic advantage, therefore, could Iraq secure by harming Iran? And what needs could Iraq meet through conflicting with it? Certainly nothing at all.

Conflict with Iran will result in complete loss that cannot be offset by any benefit. Iraq in fact cannot engage in such a conflict unless forced to in defence of its own national identity. Against this background of objective facts, could the Iraqi leadership, therefore, mistakenly engage in such a battle unless this was imposed on it? Moreover could it commit such a mistake while it has always been known throughout the past twelve years for its responsible and rational attitude and its remarkably great ability to counter obstacles, by-passing traps and successfully treating problems?

Somebody may say Iraq had taken up the issues of the three islands in the Arab Gulf, of the Ahwaz (or Arabistan) area and of the Shatt-al-Arab agreement, a matter which provoked Iran into retaliation in one way or another.

It is true that Iraq has raised the issues of the islands, Ahwaz and Shatt-al-Arab. But was it strange that Iraq should raise the issue of the three Arab islands, which the Shah of Iran occupied by military force and by his imperial and haughty policy of expansion and in collusion with British colonialism and American imperialism? Yet would it not be more strange that the Iranian Revolution has not expressed any intention, since the very beginning, of removing the colonial domination imposed by the Shah on these islands?

After various attempts at closing the islands issue and covering up the attitude of the new regime towards it, the head of the

regime himself clearly and openly stated that these islands were Iranian and that he would not give them up. He repeated exactly what the Shah had previously stated. Who is, therefore, to blame?

As regards the question of the people of Ahwaz, or Arabistan, we have to remember that all the peoples of Iran after the fall of the Shah's regime demanded a new position under the new regime. Obviously they did so from a revolution that had presumably toppled a despotic and chauvinistic regime which had long subjected them to its Persian chauvinistic sway, denying them their national characteristics and their legitimate rights within the State of Iran. The Arabs of Ahwaz were part of these peoples who thought they were demanding a natural and legitimate right. Yet these peoples were overtaken by the new rulers' hatred and destruction exactly as was the case under the Shah.

Which position, therefore, was strange and harmful to the other side? Was it Iraq's position of supporting the legitimate demands of the Arab people of Ahwaz for a form of autonomy within a united Iranian state, or rather that of the Iranian revolution, which denied this people, as well as other peoples of Iran, their just and simple rights and which inflicted on all of them damage and destruction?

Did Iraq demand from others what it did not like for itself, thus contradicting its own principles? Or rather was it the Iranian "revolution" which contradicted its own slogans?

Believing that it is only natural for the peoples of Iran to enjoy autonomy within a single Iranian state, the Iraqi Government had already implemented this principle within its own people, securing for the Iraqi Kurdish citizens the autonomy which they have been practising within the framework of one homeland. Who, then, contradicts whom, and who harms whom, in such a process?

It is only natural to expect a new policy in a revolution which liberates a country from a colonial and oppressive regime, whereby it renounces the previous regime's injustices and measures of colonial domination. The revolution may rightly demand more time in order to implement its programme. Equally, it may rightly discuss with the people concerned the form and extent of their demands.

Yet it is not a revolution if it rejects all these demands altogether and insists on keeping things as they had been under the previous regime.

The same applies to the Shatt-al-Arab question. The develop-

ments in the conflict between Iraq and Iran forced a formula inappropriate to Iraq's historical rights and its interests in this waterway.

This formula was reached when Iran was under an imperial and expansionist regime fully backed in its aggression against the Arab nation and Iraq by American imperialism. Why is it not natural, then, that the new "revolutionary" regime, which claims fraternity with the Arabs, should give back the rights usurped by the past regime?

Who, therefore, contradicts himself? Is it he who demands the restoration of rights usurped by a despot? Or rather he who claims to have revolted against this despot's entire policy yet persistently clings to his gains in the islands and in the Shatt-al-Arab, and enthusiastically carries out the same policies of that despot against the Arab people of Ahwaz and other peoples of Iran?

It may not be difficult, then, to find out who contradicts his slogans. The multitude of accusations and attempts to confuse the issues and mix up trenches cannot blur simple and clear facts.

History will certainly record the fact that Iraq, from an earlier stage, had felt a false and contradictory aspect in the Iranian rulers' claims. Such vigorous vision stemmed from the pure nationalist principles adopted by Iraq.

Iraq had been the first sincerely to seek to know the truth and to make it known to the Arab nation. A few months had clearly established Iraq's views despite all unfair charges levelled by some of its brothers and friends, let alone its enemies. The entire truth had been exposed.

Iraq had not opened a battle against the Iranian "revolution" nor caused it any harm. Iraq simply called upon it, with all sincerity and good will, to carry out its responsibilities. Yet the Iranians responded with all the hatred and harm that we see today.

With good will Iraq demanded that Iran renounce the anti-Arab policies of the Shah, but the new rulers behaved like their predecessors.

In establishing by facts and logic that it was not Iraq which started the conflict with Iran, we do not seek to clarify an ambiguous fact. Rather, we seek to relieve our conscience and that of our brothers from any possible self-blame in this respect.

"Why have you stirred up a conflict with a new revolution which is still suffering from difficulties and threats?" some might ask us. However, the question has already been answered

by the Iranian rulers themselves. Unlike their earlier attempts at covering up their real role in starting the conflict, they have tended recently to boast of it. Pretty clearly, Iran's President, among other officials, declared that the new regime was seeking to "export the Iranian revolution". They even stated that such a pursuit was vital to the survival of their "revolution".

Furthermore Iran's President himself openly rejected any dialogue or mediation to solve its problems with Iraq.

Hence the Iranian campaign seems to be one of the consequences which ensued from the plan of the so-called "export of the revolution". Obviously it was not in response to a stand allegedly taken by Iraq or to an act allegedly committed by Iraq. It was not even launched as a result of certain ambiguous conditions involving bilateral relations.

In view of these facts it would be quite necessary to go through all the possibilities, without any sensitivity, in order to reach the truth. In this, we rely on our self-confidence and our correct attitude.

Let us first assume that the Iranian rulers resorted to the motto of "exporting the revolution" as an outlet for their utter failure in facing the major issues brought forth by the revolution, and in handling the hostages issue. In so doing, they are supposedly trying to export their problems abroad, in order to gain some time or to amend their ruined internal front by stirring up an illusionary external conflict.

However, is it a matter of morality on their part to adopt such a policy?

The Arabs have sympathised with the Iranian revolution and welcomed its announcement asserting the Islamic identity of Iran. This assertion implied Iran's coming closer to the Arabs' side and adding its efforts to theirs in the struggle against Zionism.

Was it, therefore, an act of gratitude and morality by the Iranian rulers to make the territory of their Arab neighbours an area for the waste of their experiment which has been infused with conflicts and contradictions? Have any of the Iranian rulers' friends who promoted such an interpretation ever considered that this behaviour is not only based on dishonesty and ingratitude but also on mistaken calculations?

The Arab Homeland, despite all its difficulties, cannot be turned into a wasteland for others. Undoubtedly the Arab land has its own sons who courageously defend it.

If Iranian rulers found it possible to entertain themselves with

experimental policies in Iran, could the situation in the Peninsula and Gulf countries bordering the Zionist entity allow such experimental measures and entertainments? Wouldn't the Zionist entity exploit one of the various gaps which would ensue from the Iranian plan in order to fully implement its own designs on the whole area from the Nile to the Euphrates? Would this entity not do this, after succeeding so far in keeping Egypt away from the battle and in exploding the communal situation in Lebanon?

Blinded with conceit and persistently misled by certain powers that influence the internal situation in Iran, the rulers of Iran seem to ignore an essential fact. This atmosphere is also exploited by opportunists who keep flattering and praising their Iranian "friends", thus satisfying these rulers' conceit and arrogance; rather than telling them the truth or guiding them to the right course.

These rulers are quite unaware of the fact that, during a year of their revolution, they had turned their country into a proper area for the games of ambitious world powers. They also seem to be unaware that what has enabled them so far to keep amusing themselves with their shaky and contradictory experiment in Iran are two factors: the first is the continuous flow of oil, and the second is that the conflicting international powers in the region are still gambling on this possibility or that in Iran's confused situation.

When the proper conditions are ripe for any of these powers, Iran's rulers will have no more amusement, if they do not realise their position and repudiate their present policies.

Were the Iranian rulers really made aware of this by their friends? Were they asked to guard against conceit and to realise their situation? Again were they told by their friends that they were intentionally or unintentionally preparing their country for an eventual take-over by ambitious international powers?

Let us turn to another supposition, namely that the rulers of Iran were principled people who have given themselves the right to spread their experiment to other Islamic countries. Let us also assume that their so-called spreading of their experiment is designed to conquer Zionism and imperialism.

But in order to make the export of a particular experiment appear legitimate and necessary, and in order to convince others that it will strengthen them against such powerful enemies as the Zionists and imperialists, its advocates should first remarkably and convincingly succeed in solving their own key issues

and should command the moral and material resources and means capable of countering dangers and threats facing the said experiment itself.

Have these rulers, who fervently insist on exporting their experiment to Arab countries, really achieved this within Iran itself? Actually, the prominent aspects of the situation in Iran are:

- The disintegration of Iranian military power.
- The existence of diverse power and decision-making centres, the absence of the real central government, and the escalation of conflicts and squabbles between the political and religious ruling circles.
- The outbreak of conflicts between the non-Persian peoples in Iran and the ruling bodies, together with a general failure to solve the national minorities' questions.
- The diffusion of chaos and anarchy and the absence of security.
- Delays in production, economic deterioration, a huge rise in unemployment, and shortages in most consumer goods.
- Chaotic relations with the countries of the region and those of the world at large.

These are aspects of the present situation in Iran. Do the rulers of Iran, therefore, favour exporting all these aspects to Arab countries under the slogan of defeating Zionism and imperialism?

Let us imagine that these rulers had achieved their dreams in exporting their own experiment to the entire eastern Arab countries because geographically one cannot confront the Zionist entity without encircling it.

Let us also imagine that they had exported it to the entire countries of the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf because these command basic resources so that no effective confrontation to imperialism is possible without controlling and using them against imperialism.

However, who will be defeated by this export, Zionism and imperialism, or the Arab nation and all its achievements of struggle and construction?

Obviously it is not difficult to know the answer if we imagine that these dreams have materialised, thus turning the situation in these Arab countries into a state similar to what the pioneering experiment has brought forth in Iran. Undoubtedly it would be easy to answer this question if we imagined that the armies of Iraq, Syria and Jordan had disintegrated; that sectarian, poli-

tical and ethnic conflicts exploded in these countries as well as in those of the Gulf and the Peninsula; that chaos and insecurity became widespread; that production was disrupted; and that all political and social contradictions were fervently stirred up.

The disintegration and fragmentation of the Arab homeland, as well as the stirring up of inter-Arab conflicts, has been persistently sought by Zionism and its imperialist backers.

These powers have long been pursuing various means to achieve this target in order to eliminate the Arabs' potential for progress, unity and building a powerful state capable of confronting the Zionist entity and its expansionist plans.

The means they have been applying for this purpose ranged from direct war, espionage networks, encouragement of dissension, stirring up feuds and unrest, to using hostile propaganda and cultural media.

It is true that Zionism made considerable gains against the Arab nation in occupying the whole of Palestine and other Arab territories, in exploding the situation in Lebanon, and in dragging Sadat to treachery. Nevertheless, the Arab nation has not surrendered to the Zionist-imperialist scheme. Still it is resisting and preparing to counter the Zionist entity as well as imperialist conspiracies.

Could, therefore, the Iranian rulers' plan to export their experiment to the Arab nation strengthen it in this fight, or rather facilitate most of what the big powers have been seeking to achieve, whether these rulers are aware of it or not?

The Zionist entity has, up to the present time, been an alien body amid the Arab homeland, totally rejected by Arab nationalist forces. This situation will certainly change with the success of the Iranian plan of dismantling Arab military power and stirring up sectarian and political conflicts.

This alien body will accordingly become in harmony with the new surrounding situation which the Iranian plan aims at creating. It will not only win a "legitimacy" it has since its establishment been lacking, but it will also turn out to be the strongest among the small new states which will consequently emerge if that plan materialises.

The isolationist circles in Lebanon will also win a legitimacy they have desperately been seeking.

What advantage, therefore, could the Arab nation gain from the plan of exporting the Iranian experiment, especially at a time when this nation is fighting against Zionism and imperialism?

In whose interests are the rulers of Iran frantically persisting

in following this plan? And who is encouraging them?

Some may ask, since we recognise the corruption and deterioration in the present Arab situation, and struggle as revolutionaries against this, why we deny the Iranian revolution this role.

Obviously we do not deny anybody his role. But in order for any attempt to successfully fight these aspects it should only command the resources required but should also be genuinely oriented towards this objective.

Obviously destruction is the only expected outcome of the Iranian rulers' plan. This in fact is what has been brought by the revolution to Iran itself.

There has not been a single aspect in the Iranian experiment that indicates its capability of unification and construction in a way that effectively leads to the eradication of corruption and deterioration in the present Arab situation and to the building of a revolutionary Arab power capable of effectively confronting Zionism, imperialism and their remaining lackeys and influence.

Could we, therefore, solve the weakness of the situation in the Arab Homeland in the manner devised by the Iranian revolution? Could we solve them with destruction and anarchy? Such a solution will definitely be rejected by all true Arabs.

However, if the Iranian rulers struggle as they claim against corruption and deterioration in the present Arab situation, why should they concentrate on a system whose Arab nationalist position and cleanness has long been acknowledged by friend and foe alike? And why should they at the same time flatter corrupt, isolated and suspect regimes, against which there are even widespread uprisings of an Islamic character? The rulers of Iran have left no one with an excuse for their behaviour or with an impression of any good result ensuing from it.

In so saying we have no prejudices whatsoever against them. Their own squabbles and even the charges of treachery which they have been trading against each other bear ample witness to what we have just said.

Furthermore these squabbles and charges serve to underline the real identity of these rulers who coercively control Iran at present. They also reveal the miserable state this country is now living in and the tragic and terrible end that Iran and the entire region could in consequence reach once these rulers satisfy their own desires and achieve their own dreams.

The Iranian revolution, which was admired by many freedom-loving peoples, has nevertheless lost its appeal to them. It has

in fact become a riddle to its own friends before its foes.

The situation brought about by the Iranian rulers in Iran has become open to all possible developments which are detrimental to Iran and its unfortunate peoples which have for long been denied freedom and independence and were suffering injustice, exploitation and oppression.

Equally these possible developments could threaten the entire region and particularly the Arab nation, which is engaged in the most fierce and delicate battle in modern times against the Zionist-imperialist alliance and against the betrayal of its cause by the ruler of the biggest Arab country.

It is worthy of note here that some Arab officials and political circles bury their heads in the sand, pretending that there is nothing to worry about or to demand a responsible attitude.

Sincerely concerned less to offend others than to formulate a unanimous and true Arab position toward this issue, we shall be obliged here to talk with some frankness, exposing some, but not all, related false aspects.

To begin with, we have to mention that it is a great delusion to think that the revolution in Iraq, led by the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party and President Saddam Hussein, fears for its own system from the so-called export of Iranian revolution.

The political system in Iraq is not merely a government. Rather, it is a nationalist and socialist and democratic revolution covering all aspects of life and embracing all parts of society.

A new Iraq has been born out of the past twelve years of extensive revolutionary change and sincere efforts to build the country and serve the people. This process has greatly consolidated the sense of patriotism for millions of Iraqis who have been increasingly realising that the revolution of 17-30 July 1968 is their own revolution, that the Ba'th Party is their own Party and that Saddam Hussein is their own leader.

Essentially the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party is not a traditional political organisation. Rather, it is a group of cells of brave revolutionaries who originated in the remote countryside of northern, middle and southern parts of Iraq and in the poor suburbs of its towns.

Ba'thists are experts in underground activities and organisers of demonstration, protest, uprising and armed revolution. They are the real fighters against oppressors and deviationists.

The Iraqi people had at an earlier stage set their hopes on them to confront the Baghdad Pact and Nuri Said's oppressive régime. These Ba'thists were the real fighters against General

Qassim's dictatorship and the tyrannical attitude of the Iraqi Communist Party, as well as the anti-Arab elements in 1959. They belong to the first Arab revolutionary and popular movement that successfully launched an armed revolution: that of February 1963 in Iraq.

They were the same fighters who launched the second revolution in 1968 against the decadent and reactionary Arif regime. If such are Ba'thists there is nothing for them to worry about.

As for Mr Saddam Hussein, the leader of this experiment, it is quite well known that he is not a politician who came to office by false parliamentary elections or by inheritance.

He is the same youth who has started his political struggle when he fired his machine gun in Rashid Street (Baghdad, 1959) at the dictator Abdul Karim Qassim, teaching him a hard lesson.

He is the fighter who was sentenced to death, who led the underground military and civilian cells of the Ba'th Party after the apostasy of November 1963, and who was imprisoned in 1964 and later escaped to continue the course of the struggle in which he played a leading role until the success of the Revolution of 17-30 July 1968.

He is the fighter, organiser, thinker and leader.

There is nothing, therefore, for the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party or for Mr Saddam Hussein to fear.

He who imagines that it is possible to exploit the sectarian background in Iraq to threaten its unity or to infringe on the Arabism of its sons is greatly deluded.

Within the Arab historical context Iraq has a long history. It has always been a bastion of Arab nationalism and a great barrier defending it against the invasions of Persians and other ambitious groups.

Iraq would inevitably have been fragmented centuries ago if the nationalist Arab character of the country and its people were likely to be ruined. It would have been disintegrated during Qassim's regime and the communist domination over the country (in the late fifties and early sixties). It would not even have waited twenty years later for an external force, namely the Iranian rulers, to encroach upon its integrity and its Arab character at a time when it is under the Ba'th Party's Revolution and Saddam Hussein's leadership.

Iraq is an indivisible and coherent body with all its Islamic communities and ethnic particularities.

He who falsely imagines that he can threaten this country

may try if he is intent on it.

Hence the question is not that the Ba'th Party and the revolution in Iraq fear for their own survival because of what happens in Iran or because of the threats launched by its rulers against Iraq.

Shouldering an Arab nationalist responsibility, Iraq in fact is worried about the likely evils that will face the Arab nation as a result of the situation that the Iranian rulers seek to bring about in the whole region, largely assisted by the contradictory and opportunist attitudes of certain Arab ruling and political circles which irresponsibly encourage the Iranian rulers to further arrogance and deviation.

The attitudes of many Arab rulers and political parties towards Iran seem to be illogical.

Ever since the outbreak of the Iranian Revolution the Iranian leaders, Khomeini, Bani-Sadr, Qotbzadeh and others, have not spared one day without attacking in a statement or speech, communism, communist parties and the Soviet Union. Yet, communist organisations such as Naief Hawatmeh's and communist parties such as the Iraqi Communist Party flatter and praise those rulers. They even publish in their own papers the distortions made by these rulers against the revolutionary leadership of the Ba'th Party, against the Party itself and against its Revolution in Iraq.

Let us take another example. The Iranian propaganda machine has for long set out to launch a fierce campaign of slander against the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party and against the Arab nationalist ideology. Bani-Sadr even accused the Arab nationalist movement of being, among other things, Zionist.

Yet in Syria there is a regime which claims to be the system of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party. It also claims to be based on Arab nationalist ideology. Yet it ignores the Iranian "ideological" insults by Iran's rulers and makes alliances with them against Iraq.

A third example is related to the attitude of Colonel Qaddafi of Libya. The Iranian rulers have continuously been raising the issue of Qaddafi's responsibility for Musa al-Sadr's killing. They have even used it to blackmail Qaddafi's regime.

If Khalkhali declared Qaddafi innocent of al-Sadr's death other rulers would hasten to establish a high-powered committee to reinvestigate the issue. Then they postpone this process and so on. The Iranian rulers have so far refused to establish diplomatic relations with Qaddafi's regime. Yet Qaddafi has

continuously been praising the Iranian revolution, describing it as an extension to his own so-called revolution.

How can such a peculiar situation be interpreted? And what is the purpose of this deliberately complex process of confusing the issue?

These three parties, the Communists and the Syrian and Libyan regimes, claim to have ideologies. Is it not, then, strange that these ideologies are being daily insulted and attacked by the Iranian rulers while these "ideological" parties not only behave as if they were not concerned at all, but also praise and flatter these rulers?

I am not going to explain the attitudes of these parties. They themselves may do so for their own followers. But we feel it a strange case at least which, beside others, has encouraged those conceited, obsessed and suspicious Iranian rulers to continue their harmful attitude, their ill-intentioned dreaming and their suspicious schemes.

Given such attitudes by certain Arab parties, these rulers cannot tolerate Iraq's nationalist, principled and coherent attitude, which is not only true to its ideological basis but also to the interests of the Arab nation.

Hence the hysterical attitude by these rulers against the nearby Arabs, Iraq and the Arab Gulf countries. Partly it is due to the hypocritical and subservient attitude of certain remote Arabs.

By such a process of confusing issues and mixing up trenches, what is planned against the region and the Arab nation with its basic issues in unity, independence and the liberation of Palestine?

The Arab nation has never experienced such a process with all its complexity, cover-up, deceit and hypocrisy.

Who is, then, behind this unprecedentedly wide-scale and complex process? And who is behind this attempt at bringing Islam to a position conflicting with and rejecting revolutionary Arab nationalism and with socialism?

Why should Bani-Sadr be so daring as to accuse Arab nationalism of being Zionist? Was it not under Arab nationalism's banner that the Arabs struggled against the Ottomans' domination and chauvinism?

Was it not Arab nationalism with its progressive essence carried by veteran Arab nationalist fighters — the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party, Nasser and the Algerian revolution — that powerfully moved the masses against British and French

colonialism and against colonialist military alliances?

Was it not Arab nationalism, the revolutionary force behind Arab and Palestinian struggle against Zionism and imperialism?

Why and in whose interest, then, have these attempts to distort and discredit Arab nationalism been carried out? And how can we understand this alliance which is sometimes overt and sometimes covert, between movements using a religious guise and Communist organisations which are supposedly in contradiction to each other.

What brought them together and within one trend to strike at Arab nationalism and throw doubts upon the approach of Arab national independence? Why should they fervently move with such hatred to damage the Arab nationalist bonds which have brought together the sons of the Arab nation irrespective of their persuasions, and unified their struggle against Zionism and imperialism?

Who is behind such a complex process of confusing the whole situation and inventing conflict between uncontradictory issues and forces, and harmony between conflicting ones?

What evil forces are behind the attempts at confusing Arab youth and the Arab masses in general?

What advantage could the Arab nation ever get from the position that those forces fervently and noisily work on pushing the Arab nation towards?

Is such a position going to strengthen the Arab nation's struggle against Zionism? Or rather is it going to fragment the Arab nation and trigger conflict between its sons, and to spread the Lebanese experiment over large areas of the Arab Homeland so as to facilitate the Zionist conspiracy to reach the Euphrates after it had reached the Nile?

Could such a position enhance the Arab struggle against imperialism? Or rather is it imperialism which is going to exploit it to spread its domination over the minor parts which will result from the fragmentation of the Arab nation? Would not independence, hopes of unity, the liberation of Palestine be in consequence-lost? And would not the Arab nation go back to the Mameluke period and the communal kings and be divided into minor parts to the advantage of big powers?

Why should Iraq and its faithful nationalist leadership become a target of all this fervent campaign of hatred? Would not the anti-Iraq plan, then, be ferociously aimed at the role of Iraq throughout history and at present?

Led by the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party and by President Saddam

Hussein, Iraq is a distinguished model of free will and national independence, economically and politically.

Iraq is also a model for the national system which deals equitably with all its citizens. Hence, national unity, security and stability have been greatly enhanced. Proper circumstances for prosperous construction have thus been provided.

The rate of progress is high in every field; in agriculture, industry, culture and services. Iraqis are leading a new life with every prospect of a happy future for all citizens.

This country is guarding the Arab interest and sacrificing its own interests for the sake of the Arab nation's issues of independence, sovereignty and the liberation of Palestine.

The leadership of Iraq is the one which courageously took the historic initiative of confronting the conspiracy of Camp David and Sadat's betrayal. Thus, it has shouldered, and still does shoulder, the responsibility of the Baghdad Summit.

This is the leadership which — through the National Declaration announced by President Saddam Hussein on 8 February 1980 — has called for defending the Arab land against foreign influence. It also warned against establishing foreign military bases at a time when heated imperialist attempts are afoot to spread foreign influence over Arab territory.

This leadership is the one which has called for organising the relations of the Arab nation with its neighbours on a basis of co-operation, good neighbourliness and fraternity.

These are some of the characteristics of the position in Iraq today. To whose advantage, then, has it become a target for this whole campaign of slander and distortion? Was it an attempt to punish Iraq because of its past achievements and its present role in Arab life?

The Arab masses today suffer from various bad trends. Many forces fervently seek to confuse their vision, to shake their self-confidence and to lead them to the abyss.

Yet, despite all attempts at confusing the issue and mixing up the trenches, these experienced masses can distinguish between the road of good and the road of evil. They can also distinguish between facts and lies and between truth and distortion.

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رقم الإيداع في المكتبة الوطنية : ٥١٧ لسنة ١٩٨١

الصراع العراقي - الإيراني أسئلة ومناقشات

مع ملحق (لكي لا تختلط الأوراق وتتداخل الخنادق وتتمازج المؤامرات)

بقلم طارق عزيز

ترجمة: ناجي الحديشي

(الطبعة الإنكليزية)

إصدار : مركز العالم الثالث للدراسات والنشر - لندن
بالتعاون مع دار الترجمة والنشر باللغات الأجنبية
وزارة الثقافة والإعلام - بغداد